The Christian Catechism of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)

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Preliminary Concepts

On Divine Revelation

Question (Q.) What does a book called “Christian Catechism” comprise?

Answer (A.) A guide to the knowledge of the Christian teachings about faith and piety.

Q. Why does such a guide call itself a “catechism”?

A. Catechism means “proclamation,” that is, the initial teaching, which even from the most ancient times of Christianity was taught to those who entered the Church.

Q. Does a catechism contain the whole essence of Christian teachings about faith and piety?

A. Far from it. The teaching of the Church in its content abounds to infinity, as the Lord God is infinite, and must be studied by a Christian continually for all his life.

Q. By what books and under whose guidance must we strive to further attain a more perfect study of our Faith?

A. First of all, from books that contain divine revelation, and moreover, through listening to the divine services and Church sermons and by other means, such as through conversation with the Church’s pastors.

Q. What is meant by divine revelation?

A. What God Himself has revealed to men so that they can, in a manner which leads to salvation, believe in Him and worthily honor Him while doing His holy will.

Q. Has God given such a revelation to all men?

A. He indeed gave this to all men, as necessary for all and for their salvation, but since not all people are capable of directly accepting revelation from God, He chose special heralds of His revelation, who would pass it on to everyone who desires to accept it.

Q. Why are not all men capable of directly receiving revelation from God?

A. Because of the impurity of sin and weakness of spirit and body.

Q. Who were the heralds of the revelation of God?

A. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other prophets received and preached the beginnings of the revelation of God, but the revelation of God in full and perfect form was brought to earth by the incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and spread throughout the universe through His disciples and apostles. The Apostle Paul speaks at the beginning of his Epistle to the Hebrews thus: “In these last of days spoke to us through the Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the ages” (Heb. 1:2). The Evangelist John writes in the Gospel: “No one hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, that One declareth Him” (John 1:18). Jesus Christ Himself says: “All things were delivered to Me by My Father. And no one doth fully know the Son, except the Father; nor doth anyone fully know the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son is willing to reveal Him” (Mt. 11:27).

Q. Could not man have a knowledge of God without special revelation from God?

A. A person can perceive God by pondering the things created by God, but this knowledge is imperfect and insufficient and can only serve as a preparation for faith or as an aid to the knowledge of God from His revelations.

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived by the things which are made” (Rom. 1:20).

Q. How was divine revelation taught and delivered to men?

A. In two ways: through Sacred Tradition and Holy Scripture.

About Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition

Q. What is considered Scripture?

A. Books written by the Spirit of God through men sanctified by God, who are called prophets and the apostles. These books are commonly called the Bible.

Q. What does the word “Bible” mean?

A. The word Bible is Greek. It means “books.” This name expresses the fact that these sacred books are more chiefly worthy of attention before all other books.

Q. Do all people recognize the books containing divine revelation, namely those in the Bible?

A. Far from it: there are many peoples who do not know these books at all, and there are many people and groups that reject them. There are some groups who recognize one part of these sacred books, and the other parts they reject; for example, the Jews, who recognize most of the books of the Old Testament but reject the whole New Testament.

Q. Who has certified the canon of books containing divine revelation for us Orthodox Christians?

A. The Sacred Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Q. By whom and where is such a testimony of Holy Tradition given?

A. By the holy Church at her solemn meetings called ecumenical councils which consisted of the most renowned spiritual pastors in the whole world.

Q. Whence is it clear that the Church has been given such infallible discernment between true divine revelation and human knowledge and false teachings?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ promised the apostles the Holy Spirit, Who will guide them into all truth, which was fulfilled on the 50th day after His Resurrection from the dead.

“But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, that One shall teach you all things, and shall remind you of what I said to you” (John 14:26). And again: “But whenever that One, the Spirit of the truth, should come, He will guide you into all the truth” (Jn. 16:13).

Q. These words refer to the apostles, but where can one see that the gift of the Holy Spirit would also be transferred to the Church?

A. The apostles have certified that the guardian of the truth of God would always be the holy Church, “the Church of the living God, pillar and stay of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Saint Irenaeus, writer of the late 2nd century of Christianity, writes: “One should not seek the truth among others which is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth, so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life” (*Against Heresies*, Book 3, Ch. 4).

Q. Do all who accept the books of divine revelation also recognize the ecumenical councils and the Church herself?

A. No, there are some confessions of faith who recognize only the main book of divine revelation, the Bible, but they reject the Church and Sacred Tradition.

Q. What kind of foundation do such followers of those teachings have for their faith in the Bible?

A. They have no grounds whatsoever, for the authenticity of many books of the Bible are disputed by many, and the very recognition of these books as divine revelation without any trust in the witness of the Church is groundless, because there are other books written by Christ’s disciples just as the books of divine revelation, e.g., the epistles of the Apostle Barnabas and Saint Clement, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, which, although reverenced by the Church, are not part of the Bible.

Q. Is all Sacred Tradition confined to the determinations of the Church at the ecumenical councils?

A. Far from it. Other than establishing the canon of the Bible, the ecumenical councils pronounced not very many determinations of faith, piety, and church government. These determinations are enclosed in the book of the canons, the *Rudder*, but they do not exhaust the entire content of Holy Tradition.

Q. What is meant by "Holy Tradition"?

A. By the name of Holy Tradition we mean that teaching of faith and piety that true believers and the God-revering sons of the Church by word and example passed on to one another, and forebears to their descendants.

Q. Which is more ancient, Sacred Tradition or the Holy Bible?

A. The most ancient and original way of spreading the revelation of God is Sacred Tradition. There were no sacred books from Adam to Moses. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself delivered His divine teachings and ordinances to His disciples by word and example, not by a book. In the beginning, the apostles also spread the Faith and established the Church of Christ in the same way. The need for tradition is evident from how only a minority of people can profit by books, but all can profit through tradition.

Q. Does Holy Tradition remain a subject which is only passed on orally?

A. No, besides the book of canons of the ecumenical councils (*Rudder*), Holy Tradition at different times was contained in other books, of which there are many, for example, liturgical books, the writings of the holy fathers of the Church, and stories about the heroic feats of the saints.

Q. Should everything included in these books be recognized as Holy Tradition, that is, an infallible truth?

A. No, but only what is accepted by every Orthodox Church or by the entire Orthodox Catholic Church, but that which is held only by some churches, for example, local traditions and customs, but not accepted by the whole Church, may be emendable and even revokable.

The Lord Jesus Christ says: “I am the vine, the true one, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me which beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch which beareth fruit, He pruneth it, in order that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1-2).

Here the Lord speaks not about His Person, but about His spiritual body, i.e., about the Church headed by Him, from which God separates out all falsehood and cultivates in her only that which is true.

Q. Why was Holy Scripture given to men?

A. So that the revelation of God would be preserved accurately, that is, in the same words in which it was taught by the heralds of revelation.

In Holy Scripture we read the words of the prophets and the apostles exactly as we would have if we lived with them and heard them, despite the fact that the holy books were written several centuries and millennia before our time.

Q. If Holy Scripture, as contested by heretics in its authenticity and inspiration, needs the testimony of the Holy Tradition of the Church, then cannot this very testimony be doubted in its authenticity?

A. By no means, since history has even preserved in vast volumes the records of the debates that took place at the ecumenical councils, and their authenticity is not denied even by unbelievers.

Q. But if the authenticity of the decisions of the Church in the councils is beyond doubt, then how does one justify our trust in her teaching and her decision on the canon of the Bible when faith in the very infallibility of the holy Church is based on the words of the Bible? Or put another way: do we recognize Scripture by testimony of Holy Tradition, or Tradition by the testimony of the Scriptures?

A. Neither Holy Scripture is based on the sole testimony of Holy Tradition, nor vice versa; both Scripture and Sacred Tradition have many other proofs of their truth.

Q. What is this evidence? What are the signs proving the truth and divine origin of Holy Scripture?

A. The signs of this are as follows:

1. The loftiness of this teaching, indicating that it could not have been invented by the human mind.

2. The purity of this teaching, showing that it came from the purest mind of God.

3. Prophecies.

4. Miracles.

5. The powerful effect of this teaching on human hearts, inherent only in God's power.

Q. How is prophecy a sign of true revelation of God?

A. This can be explained by an example. When the Prophet Isaiah foretold the birth of Christ the Savior from the Virgin, what the natural human mind could not even imagine, and when, a few hundred years after that prophecy, our Lord Jesus Christ was born from the blessed Virgin Mary, then one cannot help but see that this prophecy was the word of the omniscient God and that the fulfillment of the prophecy was the work of the almighty God. Therefore, the holy Evangelist Matthew, recounting the nativity of Christ, quotes the prophecy of Isaiah: "'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel,' which is, being interpreted, 'God with us'" (Mt. 1:22-23).

Q. And what are miracles?

A. Works that cannot be done by either force or human art but only by the almighty power of God, for example, resurrecting a dead person.

Q. In what manner do miracles serve as a sign of the true word of God?

A. He who works true miracles acts by the power of God; therefore, he is pleasing to God and communes with the Spirit of God. And peculiar to such a person is that he speaks only the pure truth, so when he speaks in the name of God, then through him, without a doubt, the word of God is proclaimed. Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself recognizes miracles as an important testimony of His divine mission: “The works which the Father gave to Me in order that I should finish them, the very works which I do, bear witness concerning Me that the Father hath sent Me forth” (Jn. 5:36).

Q. From what in particular can one especially see the powerful influence of Christian teaching?

A. From the fact that the twelve apostles, who were chosen from people of poor, uneducated, and low birth, have by this teaching conquered and subdued the mighty, the rich, and kings and kingdoms to Christ.

Q. If the Holy Scriptures have such strong proofs of their truth, are not these proofs satisfactory enough apart from Holy Tradition?

A. No, these proofs are not enough. The final proof of the power of the effects of Christian teaching is witnessed to by Holy Tradition or the history of the Church, but besides that, the enumerated signs do not accompany all the parts and words of Holy Scriptures with such obviousness, so a Christian needs a special witness of their authenticity, and this the Lord promised in the person of the apostles and the Church.

Q. Why else does Christianity need Holy Tradition?

A. For guidance to a correct understanding of Holy Scripture and for the correct fulfillment of the sacraments (mysteries) and other clerical functions in the purity of their initial establishment.

Saint Basil the Great talks about this as follows: “Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church, some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us ‘in a mystery’ by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay—no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the

institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is there who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the Cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? What writing has taught us to turn to the East in prayer? Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostle or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching. Moreover we bless the water of Baptism and the oil of the Chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of Baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learned the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents" (*On the Holy Spirit*, Ch. 27).

Q. So how does the Church fulfill her role as the treasury of divine revelation?

A. She, firstly, testifies to the canon and the uncorrupted content of Scripture or the Bible; secondly, it preserves and successively passes from generation to generation those truths of faith and rules of piety which were transmitted to her by the holy apostles orally: this is called, in particular, Apostolic Tradition; thirdly, it possesses the gift of grace to infallibly expound God's word or the truths of Holy Scripture and, when perplexity and controversy arises, to give these truths an accurate definition called dogma.

In the service for the three great hierarchs, the Church sings to them: "With words of reasoning ye expound dogmas, which, earlier, fishermen by the power of the Spirit laid out in simple words; for it was meet that the initial exposition of our Faith be simple."

The fathers of the First Ecumenical Council are also glorified similarly: “The preaching of the apostles and the dogmas of the fathers affirmed the one Faith of the Church.”

Q. Does Sacred Tradition, like Scripture, have signs of its truth and divinity?

A. Undoubtedly it does. First of all, the loftiness of this teaching, as set forth by the holy fathers, earned some of them the title “The Mouth of Christ,” for example, Saint John Chrysostom.

Secondly, the purity of this teaching, which conquered the countless attempts by heretics to distort the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, was expressed in the decrees of the ecumenical councils with amazing power, in full agreement with the teachings of the New Testament, so that the whole congregation of the fathers exclaimed as they were listening, for example, at the Fourth Ecumenical Council, to the theological epistle of Saint Leo of Rome: “The holy Apostle Peter has spoken through the mouth of Leo.”

Third, prophecy.

Fourth, the wonders and miracles of the apostles continued even after the writing of the Book of Acts (as their lives testify), and equally wondrous miracles and prophecies of the holy martyrs, hierarchs, and monastic saints continue even up to now, for example, Venerable Seraphim of Sarov (d. 1833).

Q. Does the Holy Scripture alone have the fifth sign of its truth mentioned above, that is, a powerful effect on the hearts of men?

A. No, the words of Holy Tradition also greatly exhibit a powerful effect on men’s hearts, for example, the Church’s prayers that converted the ambassadors of Saint Vladimir (988) and then the entire Russian people.

Q. From what source of divine revelation does faith begin to grow in those who turn from unbelief to Christ?

A. It differs: for a minority, faith in Christ is kindled through reading or hearing the words of Holy Scripture, and then the willingness to accept everything that the Lord and the apostles commanded starts to grow, which includes obedience to the Church. This is how Saint Justin

Martyr turned to God, a philosopher who lived in the middle of the second century. The majority of people, however, accepted faith into their hearts upon witnessing the heroic struggles of the holy martyrs and other saints and their miracles, being convinced of their sagacity. And then with faith they accepted the sacred books offered to them.

Q. In what manner do the children born to Christian families acquire the Christian Faith?

A. They begin to assimilate the Faith through tradition, taking to heart their parents' words about God and Christ and imitating their elders in prayers, and then with faith they begin to listen and read the Holy Scriptures.

Q. What examples of both types of turning to God are found in the sacred books?

A. From the book of the Acts of the Apostles we learn how the two speeches of the Apostle Peter included in Holy Scripture, which were accompanied by miracles, turned three thousand and then five thousand men to Christ (see Acts 2:3).

Such is the power of the words of Holy Scripture when received in the ears of men. But no less striking was the living acquaintance with the people themselves, with the prayers and mutual admonitions of Christians, which were also called prophecies, as evidenced by the Apostle Paul: "But if all be prophesying, and some unbeliever or one unlearned should come in, he is reproved by all, he is examined by all. And thus are the secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling upon his face, he will make obeisance to God, reporting that God is verily among you" (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Here faith in the Church precedes faith in Christ and Holy Scripture.

Q. Is there yet another sign of the truth of Christ's teaching and Orthodox piety common to both the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition?

A. Such a sign is known quickly and absolutely by the one who irrevocably decides to lead a virtuous life and overcome the sins and passions. He will soon know that this is possible only for those who believe in Christ and His Gospel and are guided by the rules of piety contained in the holy Church in Sacred Tradition. The Lord Jesus Christ said this during His earthly life: "If anyone be willing to do His will, he shall know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak from Myself" (John 7:17).

About Holy Scripture, in Particular

Q. When were the sacred books written?

A. At different times. Some, before the Nativity of Christ, and others after.

Q. Do these two definitions of the sacred books have special names?

A. They have. Those sacred books that are written before the Nativity of Christ are called books of the Old Testament, and those written after the Nativity of Christ are called the books of the New Testament.

Q. What are the Old and New Testaments?

A. To put it another way: the ancient union of God with men, and the new union of God with men.

Q. Of what did the Old Testament consist?

A. Of how God promised the divine Savior to men and prepared them to receive Him.

Q. How did God prepare humanity to receive the Savior?

A. Through gradual revelations, through holy commandments, prophecies, prefigurations, prayers, and the work of the priesthood.

Q. What does the New Testament comprise?

A. How God indeed gave mankind the divine Savior, His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Q. How are the books of the Old Testament divided?

A. In the canonical, which Christians and Jews both recognize, and deuterocanonical, which only the Christians recognize; the Jews lost them.

Q. Which books are canonical?

A. 1) The Book of Genesis.

2) Exodus.

3) Leviticus.

4) Numbers.

5) Deuteronomy.

6) The Book of Jesus (Joshua) of Navi.

7) The Book of Judges and with it, as an addition, the Book of Ruth.

8) The First and Second Books of Kings as two parts of one book.

9) The Third and Fourth Books of Kings.

10) The First and Second Books of Chronicles.

11) The First and Second Book of Ezra (Esdras), and the Book of Nehemiah.

12) Esther.

13) Job.

14) Psalms.

15) Proverbs of Solomon.

16) Ecclesiastes, of the same author.

17) Song of Songs, also of Solomon.

18) The Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

19) Jeremiah.

20) Ezekiel.

21) Daniel.

22) The Twelve Minor Prophets.

Q. Which books are deuterocanonical?

A. 1) The Book of Tobit.

2) The Book of Judith.

3) The Book of the Wisdom of Solomon.

4) The Book of the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach.

5) The Epistle of Jeremiah.

6) The Book of the Prophet Baruch.

7) The three Maccabean books.

8) The Third Book of Ezra.

Q. How can one divide the Old Testament books according to content?

A. They can be divided into the following four categories:

1) Books of the Law, which constitute the main foundation of the Old Testament.

2) Historical, which contain predominantly the history of piety.

3) Pedagogical, which contain teachings about piety.

4) Prophetic, which contain prophecies or foretellings about the future, mainly about Jesus Christ.

Q. Which books are of the Law?

A. The five books written by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Jesus Christ Himself gives the whole of these books together the name of the Law of Moses (see Luke 24:44).

Q. What does the book of Genesis contain?

A. The history of the creation of the world and man, and then the history of the establishment of piety in the first ages of the human race.

Q. What do the other four books of Moses contain?

A. The history of piety during the time of the Prophet Moses and the Law given through him from God.

Q. What are the historical books of the Old Testament?

A. The Books of Jesus son of Navi, Judges, Ruth, Kings, Chronicles, the two Books of Ezra, the Book of Nehemiah, Esther, Tobit, Judith, and the Maccabean books.

Q. Which are the books of teaching?

A. Job, Psalms, the books of Solomon and Jesus, son of Sirach.

Q. What should be noted particularly about the Psalter (Psalms)?

A. It, together with teachings of piety, also contains historical information and many prophecies about Christ the Savior. It is an excellent guide to prayer and the glorification of God and is therefore used ubiquitously in the worship of the Church.

Q. Which books are prophetic?

A. The Books of the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Baruch, the twelve others, and also the Third Book of Ezra.

Q. How many books are in the New Testament?

A. Twenty seven.

Q. Are there any books of law among those, making them the predominantly foundational texts of the New Testament?

A. The Evangelion can rightly be called by this name, which consists of the four books of the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Q. What does the word Evangelion mean?

A. It is Greek and means “Gospel,” that is good news, glad tidings.

Q. What is the good news of the books called the Evangelion?

A. The divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, His coming to earth, His life on earth, His wonderful deeds and teaching which leads to salvation, and finally, His death on the Cross, the glorious Resurrection, and His Ascension to the heavens.

Q. Why are these books called the Gospel?

A. Because there can be no better and more joyous news for mankind than the message of the divine Savior and eternal salvation. That is why reading the Evangelion in the church is preceded and followed each time by a joyful exclamation: “Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory be to Thee!”

Q. Does the New Testament also contain historical books?

A. Yes. The book of the Acts of the Holy Apostles.

Q. What is it about?

A. It concerns the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and the spread of the Christian Church through them.

Q. What is an apostle?

A. The word means “one who is sent.” This is the name for the chosen disciples of our Lord Jesus whom He sent to preach the Gospel.

Q. Which New Testament books are instructive?

A. Seven catholic (general) epistles: one of the Apostle Iakovos (James), two of Peter, three of John, and one of Jude, and fourteen epistles of the Apostle Paul: to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, and to the Hebrews.

Q. Are there any prophetic books in the New Testament?

A. There is such a book. It is the Apocalypse.

Q. What does this word mean?

A. Translated from Greek it means “revelation.”

Q. What does this book contain?

A. A mysterious depiction of the future destiny of the Church of Christ and the whole world.

Q. What should be observed when reading the Sacred Scriptures?

A. First, one must read it with reverence, as the word of God, and with prayer for understanding it; second, one must read it with the pure intent to receive instruction in the Faith and motivation for good deeds; thirdly, it should be understood according to the explanation of the Orthodox Church and the holy fathers.

About Sacred Tradition, in Particular

Q. What does the book containing the main truths of Holy Tradition consist of and how is it called?

A. This book, called *The Canons of the Holy Apostles and Holy Ecumenical and Local Councils and Holy Fathers*, or *The Rudder*, contains:

I) 85 short rules of Church governance and order left to the Church by the holy apostles,

II) Ordinances and rules of the seven ecumenical councils:

1) Nicaea (325),

2) Constantinople I (381),

3) Ephesus (431),

4) Chalcedon (451),

5) Constantinople II (553),

6) Constantinople III (680), and

7) Nicaea II (787),

III) Canons of nine local councils, and

IV) the canons of some holy fathers.

Q. Who certified the canons of the holy apostles, local councils, and holy fathers?

A. The Sixth Ecumenical Council brought together all the previous canons and councils and confirmed them, that is, recognized them as authentic and expressing the teaching of the universal Church.

Q. What should be known, in particular, about the Sixth Ecumenical Council?

A. This council initially did not have time to compose the canons necessary for the Church but then, after eleven years, gathered again under the name of the Fifth-Sixth, or the Council of Trullo, and approved many canons as well as confirmed the canons of the aforementioned local councils and holy fathers.

Q. Is it possible to prove that the Fifth-Sixth Council has the same authority for the Church as the Sixth and other ecumenical councils?

A. Though some non-Orthodox confessions reject it, this is unreasonable, because its decisions, as well as the canons of the local councils, the 85 Canons of the Holy Apostles and those of the holy fathers approved by it, were reaffirmed by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, a council that they do not reject.

Q. Were all ten local councils in the *Rudder* approved by the Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils?

A. No, since the so-called First-Second Local Council (861) took place in the 9th century, that is, a hundred years later than the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

Q. What is its recognition based on?

A. On the general consent of the entire Orthodox Church, which never disputed its equality with the nine other local councils.

Q. How are the rules and regulations of the holy apostles, councils, and holy fathers recognized by the ecumenical councils?

A. They are called canonical, and those who reject them cannot remain members of the holy Church.

Q. What did the Lord say about those who disobey the Church?

A. “But if also he should take no heed of the Church, let him be to thee even as the heathen and the tax collector” (Mt. 18:17).

Q. In what other books is the Holy Tradition of the Church recorded?

A. In the books of worship, in the works of the holy fathers: Athanasius and Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Kyril of Jerusalem and

Kyril of Alexandria, Leo and Gregory, popes of Rome, John Damascene and many others; also in the biographies of the holy God-pleasers.

Q. Which of these books carry such significance as to be binding for Christians, like the book of canons, the *Rudder*?

A. Only those which were accepted for liturgical use or for teaching in temples of the universal Orthodox churches, as well as those which, although not included in the *Rudder*, were approved by the ecumenical councils, for example, the one entitled "The Epistle of Pope Saint Leo against the heresy of the Monophysites," and other than this one, at the same council, the works of the aforementioned fathers were also named as examples of true faith.

On the Catechism, in Particular

Q. If divine revelation is contained in its main truths in the books of the Bible and in the books containing Church traditions, what, strictly speaking, should a catechism contain?

A. In view of the impossibility of all Christians to thoroughly study our Faith according to the named sacred books, a catechism aims to teach them at least the most essential truths about the existence and properties of God and the most important rules of a godly life.

Q. When did catechisms begin to be compiled?

A. The first statements of faith, or creeds, could themselves be called catechisms, which were compiled by local churches under the leadership of the holy apostles or their disciples in the first centuries of Christianity.

Q. What is the difference between the creeds and catechisms, except for the brevity of the first?

A. The creeds do not speak of Christian virtue, but only about the truths of the Faith.

Q. Does that mean that the latter is much more important than the former?

A. Of course not, but the teachers of the ancient Church, like the fathers of the first two ecumenical councils, were concerned so that false teachers or heretics would not distort true faith in the minds of Christians and therefore taught them to memorize brief definitions of the truths of the Faith, nullifying the false teachings of heretics.

Q. What other works of the teachers of the Church approached being a catechism in content?

A. There were several of them in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries (the works of Origen, Blessed Theodoret, Saint Kyril of Jerusalem, Saint Gregory of Nyssa), but the title of prototype of an Orthodox catechism must be awarded to the work of Saint John Damascene of the 8th century called *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

Q. What guides a catechism in presenting the most important truths of faith?

A. The Creed.

First Part of the Catechism: About the Faith

The Creed (Symbol of Faith) and Its Origin

1) I believe in one God: the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

2) And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages—Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; coessential with the Father; by Whom all things were made;

3) Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from the heavens, and became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;

4) And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried;

5) And arose on the third day according to the Scriptures;

6) And ascended into the heavens, and sitteth at the right of the Father;

7) And shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end;

8) And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life; Who proceedeth from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets.

9) In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

10) I confess one Baptism for the remission of sins.

11) I look for the resurrection of the dead;

12) And the life of the age to come. Amen.

Q. Who expounded the doctrines of the Faith in this way?

A. The fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils.

Q. From whom did the Church learn to gather together in councils?

A. From the example of the apostles who held the Council in Jerusalem.

Q. Why did the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, in which the Symbol of Faith was composed, gather together in the first place?

A. The first was to establish the true doctrine concerning the Son of God against the false teaching of Arius, who thought impiously about the Son of God. The second was for the confirmation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, against Macedonius, who thought wickedly of the Holy Spirit.

About the Articles of the Creed

Q. What should be done in order to better understand the universal Symbol of Faith?

A. It should be noted that it is divided into twelve articles, or parts, and each article should be considered separately.

Q. What does each article of the creed talk about separately?

A. The first article speaks of God as the origin of everything, in particular, about the first Hypostasis (Person) of the Holy Trinity, about God the Father, and about God as the Creator of the world.

The second article is about the second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The third article is about the incarnation of the Son of God.

The fourth article concerns the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

The fifth article is about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the sixth article the Ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven is taught.

The seventh article is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to earth.

The eighth article is about the third Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

The ninth article is about the Church.

The tenth article concerns Baptism, where it is understood to be referring to the other mysteries as well.

In the eleventh article the future resurrection of the dead is declared.

The twelfth article is about eternal life.

About the First Article

Q. What does it mean to believe in God?

A. To believe in God is to have a living confidence in His existence and good providence for us, and to wholeheartedly accept His manifest word about the salvation of the human race.

Q. Is it possible to show from the Holy Scriptures that this is what faith in God consists in?

A. The Apostle Paul writes that it is impossible to please God without faith; for it is necessary that he who comes to God should believe that He is and that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Q. What should be the dearest and most indispensable action of the heart's faith in God?

A. A confession of faith itself.

Q. What does it mean to profess faith?

A. It means to openly admit that we uphold the Orthodox Christian Faith and, moreover, with such sincerity and firmness so that neither seduction nor threats, neither torment nor death itself, could force us to renounce our faith in the true God and in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. How are Christians punished for hiding their faith?

A. The ecumenical councils decreed that those Christians who deny Christ under the threat of execution for their faith be excommunicated for 20 years, and those who do so with yet lesser dangers for themselves, until the hour of death.

Q. What is a confession of faith for?

A. The Apostle Paul testifies that it is needed for salvation: "With the heart one believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth one confesseth unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

Q. Why is it necessary for salvation not only to believe, but also to profess the Orthodox Faith?

A. If someone from shame, or for the preservation of his temporary life, or for earthly benefits renounced the confession of the Orthodox Faith, then he shows by these actions that he does not have true faith in God the Savior and the future blissful life.

Q. Why does not the Creed just say: "I believe in God," but adds: "in *one* God"?

A. To reject the false teaching of the pagans, who, considering the creature as God, thought that there were many gods.

Q. How does the Holy Scripture teach about the unity of God?

A. The very words about this are taken in the Creed from following the saying of the Apostle Paul: "There is no other God except one. For even if indeed there are those called gods, whether in heaven or on the earth—just as there are many gods and many lords—but to us there is one God the Father, of Whom are all things, and we to Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and we through Him" (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

Q. Is it possible to know the very essence of God?

A. No, that is above all knowledge, not only of men, but also of angels.

Q. What does Scripture say about this?

A. The Apostle Paul says that God dwelleth "in light unapproachable, Whom not one of mankind did see, nor is able to see" (1 Tim. 6:16).

Q. What kind of understanding of the being and essential properties of God can be gleaned from God's revelation?

A. God is spirit (incorporeal), eternal, all-good, omniscient, all-righteous, omnipotent, omnipresent, and immutable.

Q. Show all of this from the Scriptures.

A. Jesus Christ Himself said that God is spirit (Jn. 4:24). David speaks of the eternity of God: “Before the mountains came to be and the earth was formed and the inhabited world, also from everlasting even till everlasting, Thou art” (Psalm 89:3).

Jesus Christ Himself spoke concerning the goodness of God: “No one is good, except One: God” (Mt. 19:17).

The Apostle John says, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). David sings, “Compassionate and merciful is the Lord, long-suffering and very merciful. Good is the Lord to all things together and His compassions are over all His works” (Psalm 144:8-9).

About the omniscience of God, the Apostle John says: “God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20).

About the righteousness of God David sings, “The Lord is righteous, and loved righteous acts; upon uprightness His countenance looked” (Psalm 10:7). The Apostle Paul says that God “will render to each according to his works” and “that there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:6, 11).

The psalmist says of the omnipotence of God: “For He spoke and they came into being; He commanded, and they were created” (Psalm 32:9). The archangel says in the Gospel, “For all of that which is spoken shall not be impossible with God” (Lk. 1:37).

David portrays the omnipresent God as follows: “Whither should I go from Thy Spirit? And from Thy presence whither should I flee? If I should go up into the heaven, Thou art there; if I should go down into Hades, Thou art to be present. If I might take up my wings at dawn and settle in the uttermost parts of the sea, aye, doubtless, there shall Thy hand guide me, and Thy right hand shall hold me fast. And I said, ‘Darkness, then, will trample me down; and yet night will be illumination in the presence of my delight.’ For darkness will not be darkened by Thee, and night as day shall be illuminated; as the darkness belongeth thereof, even so the light thereof too” (Ps. 138:7-12).

The Apostle Iakovos writes: “...the Father of the lights, with Whom is no alternation or a shadow cast by turning” (Iakovos 1:17).

Q. If God is Spirit, then how does Holy Scripture ascribe body parts to Him, for example: heart, eyes, ears, and hands?

A. Scripture applies ordinary human language in this case, but these words must be understood in a spiritual and higher way. For example, the heart of God means goodness or the love of God; eyes and ears mean omniscience, hands—omnipotence.

Q. If God is everywhere, then how can one say that God is in heaven or in the church ?

A. This means that when you turn to God in prayer, we must renounce earthly cares, and in the temple we must learn about Him through prayers, the mysteries, and the teaching of the pastors. Jesus Christ says, “For where there are two or three gathered in My name, there I am in the midst of them” (Mt. 18:20).

Q. How does one understand the words of the Symbol: “I believe in one God the Father”?

A. This must be understood in relation to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, because God is one in essence, but threefold in Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity coessential and undivided.

Q. Is it said thus about the Holy Trinity in the Sacred Scripture?

A. The main sayings about this from the New Testament pertaining to the essence is as follows: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28, 19); “there are three bearing witness in the heaven: the Father, the Logos, and the Holy Spirit; and these Three are One” (1 John 5:7).

Q. Is the Holy Trinity also spoken of in the Old Testament?

A. It is, only not so clearly. For instance: “By the Logos of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth” (Ps. 32:6). “Who would have known Thy will if Thou hadst not given wisdom and did not send down Thy Holy Spirit from above?” (Wis. 9:17). From the previous words of this chapter, it is clear that by “wisdom,” of course, he means God the Son.

Q. How is there one God in three Persons?

A. We do not comprehend this inner secret of the Divinity, but we believe in it by the immutable testimony of the word of God.

Q. What is the difference between the Persons of the Holy Trinity?

A. God the Father is not begotten or emanated from another Person; the Son of God is eternally generated (begotten) of the Father before all ages; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father.

Q. Do the three Hypostases or Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, assume equal dignity?

A. Completely equal divine dignity. Just as the Father is true God, so is the Son true God, and the Holy Spirit is the true God; but moreover so that in the three Hypostases there is only one triune God.

Q. Is it possible on earth to show or demonstrate by any means some similitude of how several or many persons can constitute one being?

A. The Lord foreshadowed some similarity to this in the sons of His kingdom being in close union with Himself and God and with each other, but it will be realized in greater power in the future life: “That they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me” (John 17:22-23; cf. Acts 4:32 and Eph. 2:15).

Q. Why is God called “Almighty”?

A. Because He maintains everything that is in His power and in His will.

Q. What do these words of the Creed signify: “Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible”?

A. That everything is created by God and nothing can exist without God.

Q. Are these words found in the Holy Scriptures?

A. Surely. Genesis begins with these words: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

Apostle Paul says about Jesus Christ, the Son of God: “In Him were all things created, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or authorities. All things through Him and to Him have been created” (Col. 1:16).

Q. What should be understood in the Creed by the term “invisible”?

A. That which is invisible, or the spiritual world which belongs to the angels.

Q. Who are the angels?

A. Ethereal spirits, gifted with intelligence, will, and power.

Q. What does the name angel mean?

A. It means “messenger.”

Q. Why are they so named?

A. Because God sends them to proclaim His will. So, for example, Gabriel was sent to proclaim the conception of the Savior to the blessed Virgin Mary.

Q. What was created first: the visible or invisible?

A. The unseen before the visible, and the angels before mankind.

Q. Can you find evidence of this in Holy Scripture?

A. In the book of Job, God Himself speaks of the creation of the earth thus: “Who is he that laid the corner-stone upon it? When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice” (Job 38:6-7).

Q. Where does the term “guardian angel” come from?

A. From the following words of Scripture: “He shall give charge to His angels concerning thee, to guard thee carefully in all thy ways” (Psalm 90:11).

Q. Are there guardian angels for each of us?

A. Without a doubt. You can be sure of this in the following words of Jesus Christ: “Be taking heed that ye do not ever despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in the heavens their angels continually behold the face of My Father Who is in the heavens” (Mt. 18:10).

Q. Are all angels kind and beneficent?

A. No. There are evil angels who are otherwise called devils (demons).

Q. Why are they evil?

A. They were made good, but they broke their duty of perfect obedience to God and thus fell away from Him and fell into self-love, pride, and anger. According to the Apostle Jude, these are “those angels who kept not their first place, but deserted their own habitation” (Jude 1:6).

Q. What does the word “devil” mean?

A. It means “slanderer” or “deceiver.”

Q. Why are the evil angels called devils, that is, slanderers or deceivers?

A. Because they try to deceive people and, deceiving them, inspire them with false thoughts and evil desires.

About this Jesus Christ says to the unbelieving Jews: “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father ye wish to do. That one was a manslayer from the beginning, and hath not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he may speak the lie, he speaketh out of the things which are his own; for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

Q. How does the all-good God allow the most powerful creatures to deceive the weakest, i.e., men?

A. Just as He allows the more cunning and strong men to deceive the weaker: the Lord Himself protects those resorting to Him with prayer and then makes powerless the tricks of the deceiver, as, for example, in the life of the Righteous Job.

Q. What has Scripture revealed to us about the creation of the world?

A. In the beginning God created heaven and earth out of nothing. The land was formless and void. Then God gradually created:

on the first day of the world, light;

on the second day the firmament or visible sky;

on the third the reservoirs of waters on earth, the land, and plants;

on the fourth—the sun, moon, and stars;

on the fifth, fish and birds;

on the sixth—four-legged animals living on dry land, and finally man. Creation ended with man, and on the seventh day God rested from all His works. Therefore, the seventh day is called the sabbath, which being translated from the Hebrew language means “rest” (see Gen. 2:2).

Q. Were the visible creatures created as we see them now?

A. No. At creation, everything was very good, that is: immaculate, beautiful, and harmless.

Q. How could there be light on earth before the sun, moon, and stars appeared?

A. The Bible puts it this way: “On the first day…Thou commanded a ray of light to come forth from Thy treasures, so that Thy work might appear. On the fourth day Thou hast commanded the brightness of the sun to shine, and the moon to give her light, and the stars should come to be, and all in order” (4 Esd. 6:38, 40, 45).

Q. Can those scientific teachings be consistent with the Bible and with Christianity in general that represent the formation of the world and living beings as a gradual process, mainly through the struggle for survival?

A. By no means, since this doctrine, denying the providence of God, suggests that a vicious struggle between created things began long before the creation of man. Indeed, even the human race, according to this false teaching, existed for a long time without any understanding of virtue and was in constant struggle against one another.

Q. Is there anything special known about the creation of man?

A. God the Holy Trinity said: “Let us create man in Our image and in Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). And God created the body of the first man Adam from the earth; breathed the breath of life into his face; brought Adam to Paradise; gave him for food, besides the other fruits of Paradise, the fruits of the tree of life; and finally, taking a rib from Adam during sleep, He created the first woman Eve from Adam (see Genesis 2:21-22).

Q. What is the image of God?

A. It consists, as the Apostle Paul put it, “in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:24).

Q. What is the breath of life?

A. The soul—a spiritual and immortal entity.

Q. What is Paradise?

A. The word Paradise means “garden.” This is the name of the beautiful and blissful dwelling of the first man, described in the book of Genesis as a garden.

Q. The Paradise in which the first humans dwelt, was it material or spiritual?

A. For the body, material, as a visible blissful dwelling, but for the soul spiritual, as they were in graceful communion with God and had a spiritual contemplation of creation (see St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily 38, 42; St. John Damascene, *Exact Exposition*, Bk. 2, Ch. 12, Art. 3).

Q. What is the tree of life?

A. It was a tree, feeding on the fruits of which, a man’s body would become without sickness, and the soul immortal.

Q. Why was Eve created from Adam’s rib?

A. In order that the whole human race in its origin would be of one body and so that people would naturally be inclined to love and cherish each other.

Q. For what purpose did God create man?

A. In order for him to know God, to love and glorify Him, and through this be eternally blessed.

Q. Does the will of God to vouchsafe a person eternal bliss have a special name in the doctrine of Faith?

A. It is called the predestination of God.

Q. Does God's predestination (foreordination) for the bliss of man change if a person is not following the path to beatitude?

A. It remains unchanged, because God, by His foreknowledge and by His infinite mercy, even for a person who has deviated from the path of bliss, predetermined to open a new path to blessedness through His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. "He chose us for Himself before the foundation of the world," says the Apostle Paul (Eph. 1:4).

Q. How should the predestination of God be understood in respect to mankind in general, and to each one separately?

A. God has ordained that all men be granted and, indeed, has bestowed anticipatory grace and everything necessary for achieving bliss. Those who voluntarily accept the grace bestowed by Him, use the means of salvation granted by Him, and follow the path of beatitude revealed by Him, in truth, were predestinated to glory.

Q. How does the word of God speak about it?

A. "Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained" (Rom. 8:29).

Q. How does the Orthodox Church explain this?

A. In the statement of the Faith of the Eastern patriarchs it is stated: "Forasmuch as He foresaw that some will use their free will well, while others, badly: then, therefore, He predestined some to glory, and others to condemnation" ("Message of the Eastern Patriarchs about the Orthodox Faith," Article 2).

Q. After the creation of the world and man, what directly follows the action of God in relation to the world and especially to man?

A. The providence of God.

Q. What is the providence of God?

A. The providence of God is an unceasing action of omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness of God, by which God preserves the essences and powers of creatures, directs them to good goals, helps them with all kinds of good, and the evil that arises through removal from good He suppresses or corrects and turns it to good consequences.

Q. How does Sacred Scripture speak about the providence of God?

A. Jesus Christ Himself says: “Look at the birds of the heaven, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor do they gather into storehouses; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Ye much more excel them, do ye not?” (Mt. 6:26). In this saying is seen both the general providence of God for creation, and especially for man. The whole of Psalm 90 is an image of the special and diverse providence of God for man.

About the Second Article

Q. How should one understand the names: Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

A. The Son of God is the second Person of the Holy Trinity. This very Son of God was called Jesus when He was born on earth as a man. His prophets called Him the Christ, while still awaiting His coming upon the earth.

Q. What does the name Jesus signify?

A. Savior.

Q. Who gave the name Jesus?

A. Archangel Gabriel.

Q. Why is this name given to the Son of God at His birth on earth?

A. Because He was born to save man.

Q. What does the name Christ mean?

A. Anointed One.

Q. Where did the name of the anointed One come from?

A. From the anointing with the holy Chrism, through which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given.

Q. Is only Jesus the Son of God called “anointed One”?

A. No, since ancient times, kings, high priests, and prophets have been called “anointed ones.”

Q. Why is Jesus the Son of God called the “anointed One”?

A. Because His humanity has immeasurably received all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus the knowledge of a prophet, the holiness of the high priest, and the power of the king apply in the highest degree .

Q. In what sense is Jesus Christ called Lord?

A. In the sense that He is the true God. For the name Lord is one of the names of God.

Q. How does Scripture talk about the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

A. “In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God” (John 1:1).

Q. Why is Jesus Christ called the only-begotten Son of God?

A. It means that He alone is the Son of God, begotten of the essence of God the Father, and therefore He is of one single essence with God the Father, and therefore, beyond any

comparison, He is superior to all the holy angels and holy men who are called sons of God by grace (see John 1:12).

Q. Does Scripture name Jesus Christ “only-begotten”?

A. Yes. For example, in the following sayings of the Evangelist John: “And the Logos became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). “No one hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, that One declareth Him” (John 1:18).

Q. Why does the Creed say also that the Son of God was “begotten of the Father”?

A. This depicts the personal property by which He is different from the other Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Q. Why is it said that He was begotten “before all ages”?

A. So that no one would think that there was a time when He did not exist. In other words, this signifies that Jesus Christ is also the eternal Son of God, just as God the Father is eternal.

Q. What do the words mean in the Creed: Light of Light?

A. Those words are using visible light to approach a similarity to the incomprehensible generation of the Son of God from the Father. When we look at the sun, we see light; from this light, light is begotten, visible throughout the whole world under the sun, but also the one and the other are one indivisible light, one nature. Likewise, the Father is eternal Light (see 1 Jn. 1:5); from Him the Son of God is begotten, Who also is eternal Light; but God the Father and the Son of God are one eternal Light, indivisible, one divine nature.

Q. What is the force of the words of the Creed “true God of true God”?

A. That the Son of God is called God in the same true sense as God the Father.

Q. Are these words from the Holy Scriptures?

A. Yes. They are taken from the following saying of Saint John the Theologian: “But we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, in order that we may know Him Who is true; and we are in the true One, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and Life Eternal” (1 John 5:20).

Q. Why are the words also added in the Creed that the Son of God was “begotten, not made”?

A. This is added to the denunciation of Arius, who wickedly taught that the Son of God was created.

Q. What does “coessential with the Father” mean?

A. In other words, the Son of God is one and the same divine being with God the Father.

Q. How does Scripture speak about this?

A. Jesus Christ Himself talks about Himself and about God the Father thus: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

Q. What do these words of the Creed indicate: “by Whom all things were made”?

A. That God the Father created everything by His Son, as by His eternal Wisdom and His eternal Word. “All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that hath come to be” (John 1:3).

Q. Why is it so necessary for a Christian to equate the Son of God with the Creator of the universe?

A. Because the Son of God has brought us a teaching demanding a struggle against our sinful nature and against the world (see John 15:19), and therefore it is revealed to us: “Greater is the One in you than the one in the world” (1 John 4:4).

About the Third Article

Q. About Whom is it said in the Creed “Who came down from the heavens”?

A. About the Son of God.

Q. How did He come down from the heavens when He, as God, is everywhere present?

A. It is correct to say that He is omnipresent, and therefore He abides always in heaven and always on earth. But in earlier times on earth He was invisible, but then He appeared in the flesh; in this sense it is said that He came down from the heavens.

Q. How does the Scripture speak about this?

A. Here are the words of Jesus Christ Himself: “No one hath gone up into the heavens, except the One Who came down from out of the heavens, the Son of Man, Who is in the heavens” (John 3:13).

Q. Why did the Son of God descend from the heavens?

A. “For us men, and for our salvation,” as said in the Creed.

Q. To what effect is it said that the Son of God came down from the heavens for us men?

A. It means that He came to earth not for any one nation, and not for a few people, but for all of us, humanity in general.

Q. For what exactly did the Son of God come to earth to save people from?

A. From sin and eternal death.

Q. What is sin?

A. Transgression of the law of God. “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

Q. Where does sin come from in humans when they were created according to to the image of God, and God cannot sin?

A. From the devil. “The one doing sin is of the devil; for the devil hath been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8).

Q. But God created the devil; how then could sin appear in the world?

A. Through disobedience. The Lord created both spirits and humanity inclined to good, but in order for the good to achieve spiritual value, it must be freely chosen by created beings; the fallen angels rejected obedience to God, and Satan persuaded Eve and Adam, the protoplasts, to do the same.

Q. How did sin pass from the devil to men?

A. The devil deceived Eve and Adam and persuaded them to transgress the commandment of God.

Q. What was the commandment?

A. God commanded Adam in Paradise not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and, moreover, said to him that as soon as he tastes of it, he will die mortally.

Q. Why was it deadly for a man to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil?

A. Because it was connected with disobeying the will of God and thus separated man from God and His grace and alienated him from the life of God.

Q. How is the name of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” fitting in this instance?

A. It is fitting because a person through this tree knew by experience itself what kind of good is comprised in obeying the will of God and what kind of evil in opposing it.

Q. How could Adam and Eve obey the devil contrary to the will of God?

A. God in His goodness at the creation of man gave him a will naturally disposed to love God but nonetheless free, but man used this freedom for evil.

Q. How did the devil deceive Adam and Eve?

A. Eve saw a serpent in Paradise which assured her that if she ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then she would know good and evil and would be like a god. Eve was seduced by this promise and by the beauty of the fruit and tasted it; Adam tasted it after her example.

Q. What were the consequences of Adam's sin?

A. 1) The expulsion from Paradise and the general mortality of humanity and every living thing.

2) The distortion, or sinful corruption, of human nature and the mortality associated with it.

Q. Has all of nature been subjected to the sad consequences of the fall of Adam and Eve?

A. Certainly so. Death and corruption and mutual destruction became the lot of the animal kingdom and plants. The Lord said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground on account of thee" (Genesis 3:17). Also, the Lord cursed the serpent, or rather, the devil, who seduced our progenitors.

Q. What is the immediate meaning of these words?

A. It is evident from the further words: "In pain shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Gen. 3:17-18).

Q. What kind of death came from Adam's sin?

A. It was two-fold: bodily, when the body is deprived of the soul, which enlivened it; and spiritual, when the soul is deprived of the grace of God that vivified it by a higher spiritual life. The latter is called sinful corruption.

Q. Can the soul really die as well as the body?

A. It can die, but not like the body. When the body dies, it loses feeling and collapses; and the soul, when it dies in sin, is deprived of spiritual light, joy, and bliss but is not destroyed, and does not dissolve into nothing but remains in a state of darkness, sorrow, and suffering.

Q. How come not only the protoplasts died, but everyone dies?

A. All men die because everyone was born of Adam, who was contaminated with sin, and because they themselves sin. As from a contaminated source there naturally flows a contaminated stream, so from an ancestor contaminated with sin and therefore mortal, obviously there arises offspring also contaminated with sin and therefore mortal.

Q. How does Holy Scripture speak of this?

A. "As through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and thus death passed to all men, on account of which all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Q. Were the fruits of the tree of life useful to man after sinning?

A. After sinning, he could not eat them, since he was expelled from Paradise.

Q. Is it in accordance with God's justice that we were born of sinful progenitors and would carry their condemnation?

A. Our birth from sinful ancestors is not the only reason for our sinful state: God knew that each of us would sin just as Adam, and therefore we are his descendants.

Q. What kind of benefit was there for our ancestors to lose paradisiacal bliss and receive the lot of disease, suffering, and death?

A. These conditions of an earthly, pitiful life humbled our ancestors, and they died as righteous ones in anticipation of a better life through redemption.

Q. Was it with this intention, then, that the Lord arranged our appearance in this vale of sorrow?

A. Yes. Knowing in advance that each person would choose Adam's self-will, the Lord allows us to inherit Adam's weak nature, sickly and mortal with sinful inclinations, in the struggle against which, and even more so, in succumbing to them, we would acknowledge our insignificance and humble ourselves.

Q. Was there still hope for humanity for salvation?

A. When the first humans confessed their own sin before God, then God, by His mercy, gave them hope for salvation.

Q. What was this hope?

A. God promised that the Deliverer would come—Jesus Christ—and would conquer the devil who deceived men and deliver them from sin and death.

Q. When was this promised?

A. Words of such promises are preserved in the Bible from the time of Abraham, but Holy Tradition says that our progenitors were given a similar promise, and for that reason Eve rejoiced exceedingly having given birth to her first son, and exclaimed: "I have gotten a man from the Lord!" (Gen. 4:1)—in the hope that one of her descendants would be the Reconciler of men with God.

Q. What promises about a Savior are known from the Bible?

A. To Abraham, God made a promise of a Savior in the following words: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

He repeated the same promise to David in the following words: “I will raise up thy seed after thee.... I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever” (2 Kgs. 7:12-13).

Q. What is meant by the word “incarnation”?

A. That the Son of God took on human flesh, except for sin, and was made man, while not ceasing to be God.

Q. Where does the word incarnation come from?

A. From the words of John the Evangelist: “The Logos became flesh” (Jn. 1:14).

Q. Why does the Creed not simply say that the Son of God became incarnate, but it is also added that He “was made man”?

A. So that no one should think that the Son of God took on just flesh, or a body, but that He should be recognized as a perfect man, consisting of both body and soul.

Q. Is there any testimony about this from the Holy Scriptures?

A. The Apostle Paul writes: “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

Q. So, is there only one nature in Jesus Christ?

A No. In Him are two natures inseparable and not commingled, divine and human, and, in accordance with these two natures, two wills.

Q. Are there not therefore two persons?

A. No. There is one person, God and man together, in a word: God-man.

Q. How does Scripture speak about the incarnation of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary?

A. The Evangelist Luke narrates that when the Virgin Mary asked the angel who announced her conception of Jesus, “How shall this be, since I know not a man?” then the angel answered her: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; wherefore also that Holy One Who is born of thee shall be called Son of God” (Lk. 1:34-35).

Q. Who was the Virgin Mary?

A. The holy Virgin was from the tribe of Abraham and David, from whose offspring the Savior was to arise, according to the promise of God. She was betrothed to Joseph, a man from the same tribe, in order to be her guardian, since she was dedicated to God with a vow to remain always a virgin.

Q. Was the most holy Mary really always a virgin?

A. She was and is a virgin before giving birth, during, and after giving birth to the Savior, and therefore she is called the Ever-Virgin.

Q. With what other great name does the Orthodox Church honor the blessed Virgin Mary?

A. By the name of the Theotokos, the Mother of God.

Q. Is it possible to show the origin of this name in Holy Scripture?

A. It is taken from the following words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Emmanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

Also, the righteous Elizabeth calls the most holy Virgin Mother of the Lord. And this name is tantamount to the name Mother of God. “And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk. 1:43).

Q. In what sense is the most holy Virgin named Mother of God?

A. Although Jesus Christ was not born of her according to His divinity, which is eternal, but according to His humanity, she is worthily named the Mother of God, because He Who was born of her in the very conception and birth from her was, just as He always is, the true God.

Q. How should the high dignity of the most holy Virgin Mary be discussed?

A. According to the quality of her being the Mother of the Lord, she surpasses all in grace and in her closeness to God and, consequently, surpasses in dignity every created being, and therefore the Orthodox Church honors her above the cherubim and seraphim.

Q. What else should be observed about the birth of Jesus Christ from the most holy Theotokos?

A. Among the punishments for sin, God stipulated that Eve would give birth to children in travail. Since the childbearing of the Virgin was perfectly holy and alien to sin, it was also painless (see Saint John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition*, Bk. 4, Ch. 14, sec. 6).

Q. What were the signs prepared by God’s foresight so that mankind would be able to recognize the Savior born of her?

A. There were many accurate predictions about the different circumstances of His birth and earthly life. For example, the Prophet Isaiah predicted that the Savior would be born of the Virgin (see Isa. 7:14).

The Prophet Micah predicted that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem, and the Jews understood this prediction even before they knew that this came to pass (see Mt. 2:4-6).

Prophet Malachi, on the building of the second temple in Jerusalem, predicted that the coming of the Savior drew near, that He would come to this temple, and that the Forerunner

would be sent before Him in the likeness of the Prophet Elias, which clearly indicated John the Baptist (see Mal. 3:1; 4:5).

Prophet Zechariah (Zacharias) predicted a solemn procession of the Savior into Jerusalem on an ass (see Zech. 9:9).

The Prophet Isaiah predicted with amazing clarity the sufferings of the Savior (see Isa. 53).

David in Psalm 21 depicted the suffering of the Savior on the Cross with such precision that it was as if written at the foot of the Cross itself.

Prophet Daniel predicted that in 490 years the Savior would appear, would die on the Cross, and following this the temple and Jerusalem would be destroyed and the Old Testament sacrifices would terminate (see Dan. 9).

Q. Did men really recognize Jesus Christ as Savior at the time when He was born and lived on earth?

A. Many recognized this, but by different means. The wise men from the east recognized Him by means of a star that appeared in the east before His birth. The shepherds of Bethlehem learned about Him from the angels, who told them precisely that the Savior was born in the city of David. Simeon and Anna, by special revelation from the Holy Spirit, recognized Him when He, upon the completion of forty days from His birth, was brought into the temple. John the Baptist, at the time of the baptism in the River Jordan, recognized Him by revelation, after the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and at the voice from the heavens of God the Father: “This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). A similar voice spoke about Him to the Apostles Peter, Iakovos, and John during His Transfiguration on the mountain: “This is My Son, the Beloved; be hearing Him” (Mark 9:7). Besides this, very many recognized Him by the excellence of His teaching and, especially, through the miracles that He performed.

Q. What miracles did Jesus Christ perform?

A. People who were possessed by incurable diseases and demonic possession He healed in the twinkling of an eye, with one word or touch of the hand, and even through them touching just His garment. Once with five, and at another time with seven loaves He nourished in a desert place several thousand people. He walked on the waters and with a word He tamed

the storms. He resurrected the dead, namely, He raised the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus on the fourth day after his death.

Q. Since the Son of God was incarnate for our salvation, how did He accomplish our salvation?

A. By His teachings, by His life, by His death and Resurrection.

Q. What was the teaching of Christ?

A. The Gospel of the kingdom of God, or in other words—the doctrine of salvation and eternal blessedness, the same that is now taught in the Orthodox Church (see Mk. 1:14-15).

Q. How is the teaching of Christ salvational for us?

A. When we accept it with all our heart and act upon it. For, as the false word of the devil, which was accepted by the protoplasts, became in them the seed of sin and death, so, on the contrary, the true word of Christ, assiduously accepted by Christians, becomes in them the seed of holy and immortal life.

They are, according to the Apostle Peter, "begotten anew, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Logos of God Who liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

Q. How does the life of Jesus Christ bring us salvation?

A. When we imitate it. As He says: "If anyone serve Me, let him keep on following Me; and where I am, there My servant shall be also. And if anyone serve Me, the Father shall honor him" (John 12:26).

Q. What should be thought of those people who say, "I do not recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God, but nothing prevents me from imitating His life as the life of a most holy person"?

A. One can be sure that such people speak either completely thoughtlessly or insincerely.

Q. Is it possible to honor Jesus Christ simply as a man, albeit a perfect man?

A. In no wise. If Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, then He would be a deliberate deceiver, posing as the Son of God and presenting false miracles.

Q. But would not His teaching have remained holy and wise even if that was the case?

A. Not at all. The Lord, in all His commandments, beginning with the nine beatitudes, put a tight link between the lot of a man after death and His own judgment over men's souls; such is the meaning of the majority of His parables, for example, about the rich man and Lazarus, about the unfaithful ruler, about the merciful king, etc. Finally, the Lord requires more love for Himself than for father, mother, or children. All this is meaningless if the Savior was not the Son of God and the Judge of all humanity.

Q. What follows from this concerning the dogma of the divinity of Jesus Christ?

A. Inasmuch as even those who disbelieve in His divinity do not allow themselves to consider Him to be either a self-deluded man or a deliberate deceiver, since His sublime words, deeds of mercy, meekness of character, and long-suffering do not allow such blasphemous assumptions, then even unbelievers should admit that He was wise, righteous, and a sincere teacher, and since He taught about His divine dignity, then no reasonable reader of the Gospel can doubt this.

Q. Can these considerations be taken as proof of Christ's divinity and the truth of Christianity?

A. Undoubtedly. Over and above the five already mentioned signs of the truth of divine revelation, this sixth and strongest sign cannot be refuted by any denier of our Faith.

Q. Why are there still deniers of the divinity of Christ?

A. It is due to their frivolity and stubbornness that they will not delve into the testimony of the truth, as the Evangelist John says about the Jews who did not come to reason by the

miracle of the raising of Lazarus, using the words of God to the Prophet Isaiah: “This nation hath blinded their own eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and should be converted so that I should heal them” (John 12:40).

About the Fourth Article

Q. How did it happen that Jesus Christ was crucified, when His teaching and deeds were to inspire in all men reverence for Him?

A. Jewish elders and scribes hated Him because He denounced their false teaching and lawless life, and they envied Him because through His teachings and miracles the people respected Him more than them; therefore, they slandered Him and condemned Him to death.

Q. Why is it said that Jesus Christ was crucified by Pontius Pilate?

A. To signify the time when He was crucified.

Q. Who was Pontius Pilate?

A. Roman ruler of Judea, which was subdued by the Romans.

Q. Why is this circumstance worthy of note?

A. Because it shows the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jacob: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from his loins, until the Reconciliator comes, and unto Him is the submission of the nations” (Gen. 49:10). Namely, it was only before the coming of Christ that the Jews were ruled by descendants of Judah, and Pilate was the first Roman, a pagan, who ruled over the people of God.

Q. Why is it not just said in the Creed that Jesus Christ was crucified, but that "He suffered" also?

A. To show that His crucifixion was not just an appearance of suffering and death, as some false teachers have said, but a genuine suffering and death.

Q. Why is it also mentioned that He was buried?

A. This also applies as another confirmation that He really died and rose again, since His enemies even set a guard at His sepulcher and sealed it.

Q. How could Jesus Christ suffer and die, being God?

A. He suffered and died, not in His divinity, but as a man, and not because He could not avoid suffering but because He willed to suffer. He Himself said, "I lay down My soul, that I might take it again. No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again" (John 10:17-18).

Q. What did the Lord pray for in the garden of Gethsemane, saying: "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Mt. 26:39)?

A. One must not think that the Lord was terrified of the upcoming crucifixion and prayed for deliverance from it, because the martyrs did not walk with fear but with joy to martyrdom, and this joy did not leave them amidst terrible torments by the torturers of their bodies.

Q. What word of Holy Scripture certifies this?

A. The Apostle Paul writes about Christ: "...Who, in the days of His flesh, having offered up both entreaties and supplications to the One Who was able to save Him from death, with strong crying and tears, and having been heard on account of the reverence" (Heb. 5:7).

If the Savior prayed for deliverance from the suffering of crucifixion, it means that He was not heard.

Q. For what, then, did He pray so fervently that even the sweat fell from His face like drops of blood. What was He talking about, so deeply grieved, saying to His disciples: “My soul is very sad unto death” (Mark 14:34)?

A. The Savior grieved over human hardness throughout His whole life, exclaiming sometimes: “O unbelieving and wayward generation, until when shall I be with you? Until when shall I bear with you?” (Mt. 17:17). On the same terrible day when the worst atrocity in the history of all humanity happened, when the servants of the one God out of malice and envy decided to kill the Son of God, their Savior, His sorrow for the beloved human race had reached the highest degree. He took upon his soul every generation of humanity and was tormented by the sinfulness of every person.

Q. What do the words mean: “And having gone forth a little, He fell upon His face on the ground, and was praying that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him” (Mk. 14:35)?

A. Here should be understood not the hour of the crucifixion, but the present hour of His spiritual suffering, and He was heard, as the Apostle Paul says, because “an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him” (Lk. 22:43).

Q. How did these spiritual torments of Christ for human sinfulness become our redemption?

A. Because co-suffering love, in a mystery, united His spirit with our souls, and we draw from the spirit of Christ as it were a fountain of holiness for our souls, and by this we conquer sin.

Q. May you show this from the Holy Scriptures?

A. The Lord, a few moments before the indicated supernatural prayer, as it is called in our liturgical books, prayed aloud for His disciples: “And on behalf of them I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. And I do not make request for these only, but also for those who shall believe on Me through their word; in order that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world might believe that Thou didst send Me forth” (John 17:19-21).

Q. Did the Lord foretell that this mysterious union of redeemed humanity with God, as He prayed, would come to pass?

A. The Lord, going to His suffering and promising to His disciples that they would soon (i.e., after His Resurrection) see Him again, added, “In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20).

The Apostle Paul writes that he strives for eternal life: “Not that I already received, or already have been perfected; but I pursue, if I might also apprehend that for which I also was apprehended by the Christ, Jesus” (Phil. 3:12).

Q. Did the Old Testament prophets also foretell the fact that the Messiah, having suffered in Himself the sins of mankind, will become their spiritual head and their source of revival?

A. This is exactly what the Prophet Isaiah predicted (cf. Is. 53:10).

Q. How do the Church fathers teach about the influence of Christ’s Passion or His compassionate love for our souls?

A. Saint Symeon the New Theologian in the prayer before Communion expressed it as follows: “With the oil of co-suffering Thou dost purify and illumine them that fervently repent, and makest them partakers of the light, partakers of Thy divinity without stint.”

Q. So, what is the name of the power of Christ’s love which helps us fight sin?

A. The grace of God.

Q. How and when is it granted to believers?

A. It is granted to us through prayer, and especially in the holy mysteries; also when reading the words of God and when performing deeds of love and other ascetic struggles.

“By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was toward me did not become void; but I toiled more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Q. In what sense are the sufferings of Christ called a sacrifice, and to whom was this sacrifice made?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ was well-pleased to save humanity, that is, to return to it the possibility of communion with God and spiritual perfection. Men, infected with sin, could not achieve this themselves without the co-participation of the suffering Christ, and therefore He is a sacrifice for human sins.

Q. Why is He called the sacrifice offered to the heavenly Father or the sacrifice of divine justice?

A. It depended on the Creator to arrange human nature in this way so that a person who has fallen into sin cannot pick himself back up, but needs the help of the co-suffering God-man.

Q. Why did the Creator not deign to arrange our soul so that one's repentance is enough for the restoration of his former purity and holiness?

A. It was so required by divine justice, which necessitates that repentance and regeneration from the Fall be accomplished through podvigs (spiritual exploits) of suffering; therefore Christ's redemptive Passion is called a sacrifice offered to divine justice on our behalf.

Q. Why was the compassionate sorrow of Christ not enough for receiving mankind into His fellowship, but His bodily sufferings were also needed?

A. First, in order to sanctify our nature not only spiritually but also bodily, for the sinful contagion nestled not only in human souls but also in our bodies; and secondly, so that His love for us would be more apparent to people, for spiritual suffering is not understood by all; and finally, in order to fulfill the prophecies and prefigurations of the Old Testament. "Whenever ye lift up the Son of Man, then ye shall know that I am, and I do nothing of Myself," says the Lord about His forthcoming crucifixion, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself" (John 8:28; 12, 32). "And even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus it is needful for the Son of Man to be lifted up; that everyone who believeth in Him should not perish, but may have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:14-15).

Q. What is Christ's redemption for us from the curse of the Law which the Apostle Paul wrote about to the Galatians: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13)?

A. This is about a different curse than God's curse on the serpent and the earth after the fall of our progenitors: it is the curse of the Law which was pronounced on Mount Geval and recorded in Deuteronomy. The representatives of the people cursed murderers, adulterers, and other kinds of criminals (see Deut. 27:13-26) and in conclusion proclaimed: "Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all the things which have been written in the book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10; cf. Dan. 9:11).

Q. Why did the Apostle Paul write about this to the Galatians?

A. Christians, under the influence of the Jews, were confused by the question of whether or not this curse lies on them, as those who do not keep the Law of Moses.

The apostle refuted this doubt by stating that the Redeemer, having voluntarily died on the Cross, Himself "became a curse for us (for it hath been written: 'Cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree')" (Gal. 3:13; cf. Deut. 21-23).

Q. Is it even possible that Jesus Christ was cursed?

A. This word should not be understood in the literal sense. In Deuteronomy, one hanged on a tree or a crucified criminal is called cursed, of which it is said thus: "And if there be sin in anyone, and the judgment of death be upon him, and he be put to death, and ye hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but ye shall by all means bury it in that day; for everyone that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God; and ye shall by no means defile the land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance" (Deut. 21, 22-23). So, this curse concerns criminals who are hanged, but our Savior was crucified without any guilt.

Q. Why did He deign to accept death precisely in this manner?

A. To take away the fear from His followers concerning the curses of the Law for failure to comply with its rituals that have lost their meaning for the redeemed human race.

Q. So the cross, which was the instrument of the execution of cursed criminals, ceased to be a symbol of a curse?

A. That which has been sanctified by the Son of God can no longer be cursed, and if from the day of His willful crucifixion the ones condemned to such an execution cease to be cursed, then there is even less need to be confounded by the covenant requirement of circumcision and all the prohibitions of the old Law on food and drink, on the sabbath, and so on. This is the meaning of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians.

Q. How can we personally comprehend our participation in the sufferings of Christ?

A. The Apostle Paul answers this: “But they who are of the Christ crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

Q. How can you crucify your flesh with the passions and the lusts?

A. By abstaining from passions and lusts and by performing deeds that are repugnant to them. For example, when anger encourages us to curse the enemy and do evil to him, then we resist this desire, and remembering how Jesus Christ on the Cross prayed for His enemies, we also pray for our enemy, and thus we crucify the passion of anger.

Q. What is the significance to our salvation that the Lord had a death that lasted such a short time?

A. The answer to this is given by the Apostle Paul: “Since, then, the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same, in order that through death He might bring to nought the one who hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and might set free those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15).

The sinless Lord was not Himself subject to the law of death, just as He did not need baptism, but He voluntarily underwent both in order to sanctify with His own body that which poisoned the whole life of men, and make death itself nothing to be afraid of.

The joyous hymn of Pascha proclaims this: “Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life.” On the same day the words of Saint John Chrysostom: “Let no one be afraid of death, for the Savior’s death has liberated us.”

About the Fifth Article

Q. What is the greatest proof Jesus Christ gave that His suffering and death grant us salvation?

A. That He rose from the dead and thus laid the foundation of our own blessed resurrection.

“But now Christ hath been raised from the dead; the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep did He become” (1 Cor. 15:20).

Q. What should one believe about the state Jesus Christ was in after His death and before His Resurrection?

A. This is depicted in the following Church hymn: “In the grave with the flesh, in Hades with the soul as God, in heaven with the thief, and Thou wast on the throne, O Christ, with the Father and the Spirit, filling all things, O uncircumscribable One.”

Q. What is Hades?

A. Hades, according to its derivation from Greek, means “a place devoid of light.” In Christian teaching, by this name is meant a spiritual prison, that is, the condition of souls which through sin are alienated from the sight of God and the light and bliss that accompanies that vision (cf. Jude. 16; Octoechos, Mode 5, stichera 2 and 4).

Q. Why did Jesus Christ descend into Hades?

A. In order to preach even in Hades victory over death and deliver the souls who received His preaching of glad tidings with love.

Q. Does Scripture speak about this?

A. The following saying applies here: “For Christ also once for all suffered for sins—the just One for the unjust ones—that He might bring us up to God, after He indeed was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in Whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Pet. 3:18-19).

Q. What should be noted about the words of the Creed: “and arose on the third day according to the Scriptures”?

A. The holy Apostle Peter quotes the words for this from Psalm 15: “For Thou wilt not leave behind my soul in Hades, nor wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27).

Q. Do the Old Testament Scriptures also say that Christ was to rise from the dead on the third day?

A. The prophetic image of this is presented by the Prophet Jonah: Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights (Jonah 2:1; cf. Hos 6:3).

Q. How did we come to know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead?

A. The soldiers who guarded His tomb found out with great fear because the angel of the Lord rolled away the stone with which His tomb was closed, and, moreover, there was a great earthquake. Angels also announced the Resurrection of Christ to Mary Magdalene and some others. Jesus Christ Himself, on the very day of His Resurrection, appeared to many, namely: the myrrh-bearing women, Peter, two disciples who went to Emmaus, and finally, to all the apostles, in the house of which the doors were locked. Then He appeared to them many times for the duration of forty days; on a certain day He appeared to no less than five hundred faithful together (see 1 Cor. 15:6).

Q. Why did Jesus Christ appear to the apostles for forty days after His Resurrection?

A. During this time He continued to teach them the mysteries of the kingdom of God (see Acts 1:3).

Q. Why is it necessary for our salvation to believe in the Resurrection of Christ and in the resurrection of the flesh?

A. The apostle answers this: “And if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching empty, and your faith is also empty” (1 Cor. 15:14).

For Christians who are always persecuted for their faith in this life, in this world of untruth, there is comfort in believing that a righteous life will come after the separation of the soul from the body, for that life will be accompanied by completely different conditions. As if it were not we ourselves, but as if we were different, incorporeal beings, and therefore for the holy martyrs it was through belief in the resurrection of the flesh that they gained the courage to endure sufferings, as can be seen in the descriptions of their lives.

So, the Righteous Job, having experienced the unrighteousness of this life, gained confidence in God granting a glorious end for his human flesh. Thus did the Righteous Job believe in ancient times, in the fifth generation from Abraham: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall in the last day raise from the dust this my corrupting body, and in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another’s. My heart is consumed within my bosom” (Job 19:25-27).

Q. How does the holy Church express for us her faith in the saving significance of the event of Christ’s Resurrection?

A. In how she devotes a feast day every week to glorifying it, and the annual feast day of the Resurrection (Pascha) is called the feast of feasts and the celebration of celebrations and devotes a whole week to it, as well as with an afterfeast of forty days.

Q. What does the joyful state of Orthodox souls on the day of Christ’s holy Resurrection consist of?

A. In the gracious anticipation of the eternal bliss promised to the faithful, as the Church sings: “We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of a new, eternal life.”

About the Sixth Article

Q. Is the sixth part of the Creed, depicting the Ascension of the Lord, borrowed from the Holy Scriptures?

A. It is taken from the following sayings of Holy Scripture: “The One Who descended is the same also Who ascended above all of the heavens, in order that He might fill all things” (Eph. 4:10).

“We have such a High Priest, Who sat down on the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1).

Q. Did Jesus Christ ascend to the heavens in His divinity or in His human nature?

A. As a man, although in His divinity He was always and now continues to dwell in the heavens.

Q. How is it that Jesus Christ sits at the right of God the Father, when God is everywhere present?

A. This must be understood spiritually, that is: Jesus Christ has the same power and glory as God the Father.

About the Seventh Article

Q. How does Scripture talk about the Second Coming of Christ?

A. “This Jesus, the One Who was taken up from you into the heaven, so shall He come in the manner ye beheld Him going into the heaven” (Acts 1:11). This was said to the apostles by the angels at the very time of the Ascension of the Lord.

Q. How does it speak of His future Judgment?

A. “An hour is coming in which all those in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall go forth—they who did good things to a resurrection of life, but they who practiced bad things to a resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). These are the words of Jesus Christ Himself.

Q. How does Scripture speak of His never-ending kingdom?

A. “He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob to the ages, and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1:32-33)—the words of the angel to the Mother of God.

Q. The future coming of Christ, will it be the same as it was before?

A. It will be very different from the former one. To suffer for us, He came in humiliation, but to judge us, “the Son of Man will come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Mt. 25:31).

Q. Will He judge all men?

A. All without exception.

Q. How will He judge?

A. The conscience of every person will be revealed before all, and not only all deeds will be revealed, which one has done throughout all his life on earth, but also all the words he said, his secret desires and thoughts, and the constant disposition of his heart and the direction of his will, good or bad. “Until the Lord should come, Who both will bring to light the hidden

things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then to each one there shall be the praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

Q. Will He judge us for bad words or thoughts?

A. No doubt He will judge us, if we do not make up for them in repentance, faith, and correction of life. "But I say to you that every idle word, whatsoever men shall speak, they shall render an account concerning it in the day of judgment" (Mt. 12:36).

Q. Is Jesus Christ coming soon to Judgment?

A. The time of His coming is unknown, and therefore it is necessary to live in such a way so that we are always ready for it. "Be watching then, for ye know not the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh" (Mt. 25:13).

Q. Are not there some signs revealed to show the closeness of the coming of Christ?

A. In the word of God there are some signs revealed to us, namely: a decrease in faith and love between people, a multiplication of vices and calamities, the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, and the coming of the Antichrist (cf. Mt. 24).

Q. Who is the Antichrist?

A. The adversary of Christ who will try to destroy Christianity, but instead he himself will perish in a terrible way (see 2 Thess. 2:8).

About the Eighth Article

Q. In what sense is the Holy Spirit called Lord?

A. In the same sense as the Son of God is called Lord, that is, as true God.

Q. Does Scripture bear witness to this?

A. It is evident from the words spoken by the Apostle Peter in rebuke to Ananias: “Ananias, why did Satan fill thy heart for thee to deceive the Holy Spirit?” And further on: “Thou didst not lie to men, but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).

Q. How does one understand that the Holy Spirit is called “the Giver of life”?

A. This should be understood to mean that He, with God the Father and Son together, gives life to all creatures and to men, especially spiritual life. “Unless one should be born of water and of the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Q. How do we know that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father?

A. We know this from the following words of Jesus Christ Himself: “But whenever the Paraclete should come, Whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of the truth Who proceedeth from the Father, that One shall bear witness concerning Me” (John 15:26).

Q. Can the teaching about the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father be subject to some kind of change or addition?

A. It cannot. Firstly, because the Orthodox Church in this teaching repeats the exact words of Jesus Christ Himself, and His words are, without a doubt, the sufficient and perfect expression of truth. Secondly, because the Second Ecumenical Council, of which the main subject was the establishment of the true teaching about the Holy Spirit, no doubt satisfactorily set forth this teaching in the Creed; and the Catholic Church recognized this so emphatically that the Third Ecumenical Council, by its seventh canon, forbade anyone to compose a new Creed.

There is a teaching that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and Son, but it is refuted by the narrative of the Holy Gospel that when the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was baptized in Jordan, then the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove. Therefore, Saint John of Damascus writes, “We speak of the Holy Spirit as deriving His being from the Father, and call Him the Spirit of the Father. And we do not in any wise speak of the Spirit as

deriving His being from the Son but yet we call Him the Spirit of the Son" (*Exact Exposition*, Bk. 1, Ch. 8).

Q. Whence is it evident that it is befitting to offer the Holy Spirit worship and glorification equal to the Father and the Son?

A. This is evident from what Jesus Christ commanded: "them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

Q. Does Scripture testify that the Holy Spirit "spoke by the prophets"?

A. The Apostle Peter writes: "Prophecy was not brought about at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke while borne along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Q. Did the Holy Spirit also speak through the apostles?

A. Certainly. To the prophets, says the Apostle Peter, "it was revealed that not to themselves, but to you, were they ministering the same things which now were announced to you by those who preached the Gospel to you in the Holy Spirit Who was sent forth from heaven, into which things angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12).

Q. Did not the Holy Spirit reveal Himself to some men in a special way?

A. He descended upon the apostles in the form of fiery tongues on the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ.

Q. Is the Holy Spirit communicated to men today?

A. It is communicated to all true Christians. "Know ye not that ye are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

Q. How can one become a partaker of the Holy Spirit?

A. Through earnest prayer and the sacraments (mysteries). “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the Father, the One beyond heaven, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Lk. 11:13).

Q. What are the principal gifts of the Holy Spirit?

A. The principal and more general are, according to enumeration of the Prophet Isaiah, the following seven: the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of strength, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of the Lord, or the gift of piety and inspiration to the highest degree (see Isa. 11:1-3).

About the Ninth Article

Q. What is the Church?

A. The Church is a society of people established by God united by the Orthodox Faith, by a common law, priesthood, and mysteries.

Q. What is the purpose of this society?

A. Firstly, to preserve and correctly interpret the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition; secondly, to spread the true Faith among all nations; and thirdly, to build up her own spiritual children to spiritual perfection.

Q. What does it mean to believe in the Church?

A. It means to reverently honor the true Church of Christ and obey her teachings and commandments, according to a confidence that what dwells in her acts for our salvation, teaches, and administers the grace poured out from her one eternal Head, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. How can the Church be an object of faith, when it represents a society of men?

A. 1) The object of belief in the Church is proper to the grace that dwells in her.

2) The Church, being a visible society, because she is on earth and all Orthodox Christians living on earth belong to her, at the same time she is invisible, since she is in heaven, and all those who have died in the true Faith and holiness belong to it.

Q. What can be used to confirm the concept of the Church, which exists on earth and at the same time is heavenly?

A. The following words of the Apostle Paul to Christians: “Ye have come to Mount Sion and the city of the living God, a heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, a festal assembly and Church of the firstborn ones who have been registered in the heavens, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous who have been perfected, and to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 12:22-24).

Q. How can we be assured that the grace of God abides in the true Church?

A. First, by the fact that its head is the God-man—Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, and His body, that is, the Church, is filled with grace and truth (see John 1:14-17).

Second, by the fact that He promised His disciples the Holy Spirit, so that He would be with them forever, and that, by this promise, the Holy Spirit sets up shepherds of the Church (cf. Jn. 14:16).

The Apostle Paul says about Jesus Christ that God the Father “put in subjection all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him Who filleth all things in all” (Eph. 1:22-23).

The same apostle says to the pastors of the Church, “Be taking heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit set you for Himself as bishops, to shepherd the Church of the Lord and God, which He preserved for Himself through His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Q. How else can we be sure that the grace of God remains in the Church to this day and will remain until the end of the age?

A. This is confirmed by the following sayings of Jesus Christ Himself and His apostles: “I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her” (Mt. 16:18).

“‘I am with you all the days until the completion of the age.’ Amen” (Mt. 28:20).

“To Him be the glory in the Church in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

Q. Why is the Church one?

A. Because it is not merely a society, like the societies of men, but an incomparably more close union of believers with Christ; therefore the Church is also called the body of Christ, for it is like a living spiritual body, which has one head, Christ, and is animated by the one Spirit of God.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye also were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

Q. Then, can it be accepted that a division of the Church has ever occurred or will occur, or a separation of churches?

A. In no case. From a single indivisible Church, heretics and schismatics separated or fell away at different times and through that ceased to be members of the Church, and the Church cannot lose her unity, according to the words of the Savior.

Q. What must be said about the teaching which, based on the oneness of the high priest of the old covenant, wants to see a similar single high priest (pope) in the new testament Church?

A. This teaching is not false, but the Holy Scriptures are clear about who will replace the Old Testament high priests: none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. “And they on the one hand who have become priests are many, being hindered from continuing by reason of death; but He on the other hand, because He abideth forever, hath the intransitive priesthood” (Heb. 7:23-24).

Q. How can we be sure that Jesus Christ is the only head of the one Church?

A. The Apostle Paul writes that for the Church, as the building of God, “No one is able to lay any other foundation beside the One being laid, Who is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Therefore, for the Church, as the body of Christ, there cannot be another head besides Jesus Christ.

The Church as it must abide in all generations of the age, requires also a head that is always abiding; and such is the one Jesus Christ. For this reason, the apostles are called no more than ministers of the Church (see Col. 1:24-25).

Q. And what should one answer those who disagree thus: “Jesus Christ ascended to the heavens, but the Church needs a physical high priest here on earth leading men to God”?

A. This idea is utterly refuted in the following words of the apostle: “Wherefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever liveth to intercede on their behalf” (Heb. 7:25). From here it is clear that the above objection is based on lack of faith in Christ as the Pilot of the Church.

Q. What obligation does the unity of the Church impose on us?

A. Be “giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

Q. How does one reconcile the unity of the Church with the fact that it is made up of many separate and independent churches, e.g., of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Russia, and Serbia?

A. These are the particular churches, or parts of the one universal Church. The separateness of their visible organizations does not prevent them from being spiritually great members of the single body of the universal Church, or to have a single head, Christ, and one spirit of Faith and grace. Moreover, unity is expressed externally by the same confession of Faith and communion in prayers and the mysteries.

Q. Is there also unity between the Church abiding on earth and the heavenly one?

A. Without a doubt there is, inasmuch as they both share a single Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, thus do they also share in mutual communion between each other.

Q. What means of communion does the Church on earth have with the one in heaven?

A. The prayer of faith and love. The faithful, belonging to the Church on earth, while bringing prayer to God, at the same time are calling upon the help of the saints belonging to the heavenly Church; and this Church, enjoying higher degrees of boldness towards God, through their mediating prayers cleanse, strengthen, and bring before God the prayers of the faithful living on earth; and by the will of God, they act on them graciously and beneficially either by an unseen power, or through their revelations, or through some other means.

Q. What is the basis of the rule for the Church on earth that it must call upon the saints in prayer?

A. Sacred Tradition, the foundations of which are visible even in Scripture.

Q. Is there any Scriptural evidence of the mediation of the saints in heaven?

A. The holy Evangelist John in the Revelation saw in the heavens an angel, to whom was given “much incense, in order that he should give it with the prayers of all the saints upon the altar, the golden one, which is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God out of the hand of the angel” (Rev. 8:3-4).

The apostles exhort us to pray for one another, and one of them adds, “The entreaty of a righteous man hath much strength” (Iak. 5:16-18), and proceeds to bring to mind the power of the prayer of the Prophet Elias.

Q. But was not that the prayer of a righteous one who was still alive on earth?

A. For God there is no dead or alive. As He said, “Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him” (Lk. 20:38).

Q. What words of Scripture show us that the saints hear us?

A. The Apostle John, while foretelling the fall of Babylon, addresses the slain prophets and apostles of God with the words: “Be rejoicing over her, O heaven, and ye the saints and the apostles and the prophets, for God judged your judgment on her” (Rev. 18:20).

Q. Is there any evidence in Holy Scripture of the fact that the saints are involved in the salvation of men?

A. This is clear from the words of Christ: “Thus, I say to you, joy ariseth in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repenteth” (Lk. 15:10). The Apostle Peter writes to Christians that he intends to remind them of the virtues of Christ’s love while he is in the body, but since the Lord revealed to him that he would soon lay aside his body, i.e., he would die soon, he then adds, “But I will also endeavor for you to have after my decease these things always, so that ye may be able to put yourselves in remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:15).

Q. Is there any Scriptural evidence of beneficial appearances of the saints from heaven?

A. The holy Evangelist Matthew narrates that after the death on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, “many bodies of the saints who were asleep were raised, and came out of the sepulchers after His arising, and entered into the holy city and were manifested to many” (Mt. 27:52-53). Since a miracle so important could not be without an important purpose, then it must be assumed that the resurrected saints appeared to proclaim the descent of Jesus Christ into Hades and His victorious Resurrection, and by this proclamation to assist those born in the old testament Church to pass over to the revealed new testament one.

Q. By what evidence are we confirmed in the belief that the saints, after their repose, work miracles through some means?

A. The Fourth Book of Kings testifies that from touching the bones of the Prophet Elisaios a dead man was resurrected (see 2 Kings 13:21).

The Apostle Paul not only himself directly performed healings and miracles, but the same was happening from the “handkerchiefs or aprons from his skin” (Acts 19:12), in his absence. From this example, it is clear that the saints even after their repose can act beneficially just as well through earthly means received from their consecration.

Saint John Damascene writes, “The Master Christ made the remains of the saints to be fountains of salvation to us, pouring forth manifold blessings.” As if in explanation of this he notes, “Through means of the mind, God dwelt even in their bodies” (*Exact Exposition*, Bk. 4, Ch. 15, sec. 3-4).

Q. Does not the veneration of the saints diminish the glory of God?

A. Not at all, since this is in accordance with the words of Christ: “And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them” (Jn. 17:22). “And whosoever shall give to one of these little ones only a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, verily I say to you, in no wise shall he lose his reward” (Mt. 10:42).

Q. Why is the Church holy?

A. Because it is sanctified by Jesus Christ through His suffering, through His teachings, through His prayer, and through the mysteries. “Even as the Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her, in order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her in the laver of the water with the word, that He might present her to Himself the glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that she may be holy and unblemished” (Eph. 5:25-27).

Q. How is the Church holy when there are sinners in her?

A. There are sinners, yet those who are purifying themselves in true repentance do not prevent the Church from being holy, but unrepentant sinners, either through a visible action of the Church authorities or by the invisible action of the judgment God, like dead members, are cut off from the body of the Church, and thus it is preserved holy in this respect.

“Remove the evil one from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13).

Q. Why is the Church called Catholic, or what is the same, Universal?

A. Because she is not limited to any place, time, or nation, but she contains the true believers of all times and nations together.

The Apostle Paul says that in the Christian Church "there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all things and in all" (Col. 3:11).

Q. What is the important advantage of the Catholic Church?

A. To her properly belong the lofty promises that the gates of Hades will not prevail against her, that the Lord will abide with her until the end of the age, that the glory of God in Christ Jesus would abide in her unto all the generations of the age, and that, consequently, she can never apostatize from the Faith nor err in the truth of Faith or fall into error.

"Undoubtedly, we confess as a firm truth that the Catholic Church cannot sin or err and speak lies instead of the truth; for the Holy Spirit, always acting through the faithfully serving fathers and teachers of the Church, protects her from every delusion" ("Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs about the Orthodox Faith," Article 12).

Q. If the Catholic Church consists of all the true believers in the world, should it not be recognized as necessary for salvation that every believer belong to her?

A. Quite so. Since Jesus Christ, according to the Apostle Paul, "is head of the Church, and is Himself Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23), that in order to have a share in His salvation, you must be a member of His body, that is, the Orthodox Catholic Church.

The Apostle Peter writes that Baptism saves us according to the image of Noah's ark. All who escaped the worldwide Flood were saved only in the ark of Noah; so all who receive eternal salvation receive it in union with the Catholic Church.

Q. What thoughts and memories should one associate with the name of "the Eastern Church"?

A. In the Paradise planted in the east, the very first Church was created of our sinless predecessors, and in the same place, after the Fall, a new foundation of the Church was laid for those who would be saved in the promise of the Savior. In the East, in the land of Judea, our Lord Jesus Christ, having completed the work of our salvation, laid the foundation of His own Christian Church. From there it spread throughout the entire inhabited world; and to this day the Orthodox, Catholic, universal Faith, approved by the seven ecumenical councils,

is immutably preserved in its original purity in the ancient Eastern Churches and in those like-minded to the eastern ones, whatsoever they are, by the grace of God, and the All-Russian Church.

Q. Why is the Church called Apostolic?

A. Because it continuously and unchangingly preserves from the apostles the doctrine and succession of gifts of the Holy Spirit through the sacred laying on of hands, and therefore the Church is also called Orthodox, or "right-believing."

"So then ye are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God, who were built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

Q. What is the Creed teaching when it names the Church Apostolic?

A. It teaches us to hold fast to the apostolic doctrine and tradition and to stay away from such teaching and such teachers as are not founded upon the apostolic doctrine.

The Apostle Paul says: "So then, brethren, be standing firm and holding fast the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).

"A heretical man, after a first and second admonition, be rejecting" (Titus 3:10).

"If should take no heed of them, tell it to the Church. But if also he should take no heed of the Church, let him be to thee even as the heathen and the tax collector" (Mt. 18:17).

Q. What institution exists in the Church to safeguard the succession of the apostolic ministry?

A. The church hierarchy, or holy authority.

Q. Where does the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church come from?

A. From Jesus Christ Himself and from the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, and since then it uninterruptedly continues through the successive laying on of hands in the Mystery of the Priesthood.

“And He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, to the work of ministering, to the building up of the body of the Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Q. What holy authority can extend its influence on the entire Catholic Church?

A. An ecumenical council.

Q. To what holy authority are the main parts of the universal Church subject to?

A. The Orthodox Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, All-Russia, and of Serbia.

Q. To which holy authority are the lesser Orthodox regions and cities subordinate to?

A. Metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops.

Q. How does the holy Church teach about this?

A. Canon 34 of the Holy Apostles says, “Let the bishops of every country know who is the first among them, and let them revere him as their head.”

About the Tenth Article

Q. Why is Baptism mentioned in the Symbol of Faith?

A. Because faith is sealed by Baptism and by the other mysteries.

Q. What is a mystery?

A. A mystery is a sacred action, through which grace secretly acts on a person, or, what is the same, the saving power of God.

Q. What mysteries (sacraments) are there in the Church?

A. The *Confession of the Eastern Patriarchs* answers this question as follows: “We will name them seven according to the number of gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

1. Baptism.

2. Chrismation.

3. Communion.

4. Repentance.

5. Priesthood.

6. Marriage.

7. Holy Unction.

However, some of the other most important liturgical rites were named by the ancient Church fathers and liturgical books as holy mysteries: the blessing of water on the day of Theophany, the kneeling prayers on the day of Pentecost, as well as the consecration of a temple and the tonsure of monks. But for the teaching of piety it is important for us to know the seven mysteries already named.

Q. What is the power in each of these mysteries?

A. 1. In Baptism, a person is mysteriously born into spiritual life.

2. In Chrismation, he receives grace that is spiritually regenerating and strengthening.

3. In Communion he feeds spiritually.

4. In Repentance he is healed of spiritual diseases, which are sins.

5. In the Priesthood, one receives the spiritual grace to regenerate and educate others through preaching and the mysteries.

6. In Marriage one receives grace that sanctifies wedlock and natural birthgiving and the upbringing of children.

7. In the Holy Unction, one is healed of bodily diseases through healing of the spiritual ones.

Q. Why are not all these mysteries mentioned, but just “one Baptism”?

A. Because there was a doubt concerning Baptism: should not certain people who temporarily fall away into heresy be baptized a second time, and for this a decision was necessary, which was laid down in the Creed.

About Baptism

Q. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is a mystery in which the believer, when the body is fully immersed in water three times, with the invocation of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, dies to the life that is carnal and sinful and is regenerated by the Holy Spirit into spiritual, holy life.

“Unless one should be born of water and of the Spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Q. When and how did Baptism originate?

A. First, “John…baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the One coming after him, that is, in the Christ, Jesus” (Acts 19:4). Then Jesus Christ by His own example sanctified Baptism, having received it from John. Finally, after His Resurrection, He gave the joyous command to the apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19).

Q. What is the most important thing in the Mystery of Baptism?

A. A full immersion in water three times in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is required of the one who wishes to accept Holy Baptism?

A. Repentance and faith. Wherefore before Baptism the Creed is read.

“Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

“The one who believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16).

Q. How then can babies be baptized?

A. According to the faith of their parents and godparents, who are then obliged to instruct them in the Faith when they come to age.

Q. Can it really be possible that anyone can be given a grace-filled gift not according to his faith, but according to the faith of others?

A. It is. The story of the Gospel concerning the paralytic convinces us of this, who was brought to the Lord on a bed by four friends. It says, “Jesus, having seen their faith, saith to the paralytic, ‘Child, thy sins have been forgiven thee’” (Mark 2:5).

Q. If Baptism is a mystery that cleanses one, then why is it necessary for babies who have not yet sinned?

A. Infants, as already shown, are endowed with a fallen sinful nature, being born, according to the foreknowledge of God, as the descendants of fallen Adam.

Q. Why are there godparents at Baptism?

A. In order to vouch before the Church for the faith of the baptized, and upon Baptism, to accept him into their care, to establish him in the Faith (see Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Ch. 2).

Q. Why is there an exorcism performed over the one being baptized?

A. To drive the devil away from him, who from the time of Adam's sin gained access to men and some power over them, as if they were their prisoners and slaves.

The Apostle Paul says that all people outside of grace walk "according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now energizing in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

Q. How should one understand that in the Creed it is commanded to recognize Baptism as "one"?

A. It should be understood that Baptism is not repeated.

Q. Why is Baptism not repeated?

A. Holy Baptism is a spiritual birth, and a person is only born once, and therefore baptized once.

Q. What should be thought of those who sin after Baptism?

A. They are more guilty of their sins than the unbaptized of theirs, because they had from God a special help for the good and rejected it.

"For if, after they escaped the pollutions of the world by a full knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they then are again entangled in these and defeated, the last state hath become worse to them than the first" (2 Pet. 2:20).

Q. But for those who have sinned after Baptism, is there not some means to receive the remission of sins?

A. Yes. Repentance.

About Chrismation

Q. What is Chrismation?

A. Chrismation is the mystery in which the believer, with the anointing of the members of his body with consecrated Chrism in the name of the Holy Spirit, receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit, regenerating and strengthening him in the spiritual life.

Q. Is this mystery spoken of in the Sacred Scriptures?

A. About the inner action of this mystery, the Apostle John says this: "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.... The anointing which ye received from Him abideth in you, and ye have no need that anyone be teaching you; but as the same anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John 2:20, 27).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul says, "Now the One Who establisheth us with you in Christ, and Who anointed us, is God, Who also sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

Hence the words spoken at Holy Chrismation: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Q. Is the external action of Chrismation mentioned in Holy Scripture?

A. One is able to think that the words of the Apostle John refer also to a visible anointing, but it is better known that the apostles used the laying on of hands for communicating the gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized (see Acts 8:14-17). The successors of the apostles, instead, began to use Chrismation, which could serve as an image of the anointing used in the time of the Old Testament (see Ex. 30:25; 1 Kings 1:39; St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Ch. 4).

Q. What should be noted about the Holy Chrism?

A. That it is reserved for the higher hierarchs to sanctify it, as successors of the apostles, who themselves used laying on of hands to give the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Q. What does the anointing of the brow signify?

A. Sanctification of the mind or thoughts.

Q. Anointing of the breast?

A. Sanctification of the heart or desires.

Q. The anointing of the eyes, ears, and lips?

A. Sanctification of the senses.

Q. Anointing of the hands and feet?

A. Consecration of the deeds and all the conduct of a Christian.

About Communion

Q. What is Communion?

A. Holy Communion is a mystery in which the believer, under the appearance of bread and wine, partakes of the very body and blood of Christ for eternal life.

Q. How was this mystery established?

A. Just before His Passion, Jesus Christ performed this for the first time, foreshadowing in it a living image of His salvific sufferings, and after communing the apostles, He gave them the commandment to perpetually perform this mystery.

Q. What should be noted about the Mystery of Communion in respect to Christian worship?

A. That this mystery constitutes the main and essential part of Christian worship.

Q. What is the name of the service in which the mystery of the Eucharist is performed?

A. The Liturgy.

Q. What does the word liturgy mean?

A. A communal service. But the name of the Liturgy is assigned especially to the divine service in which the Mystery of Communion is performed.

Q. What kind of bread is used for the mystery?

A. Such as what is required by the very name of bread, the holiness of the mystery, and the example of Jesus Christ and the apostles, that is, bread that is leavened, pure, and made of wheat.

Q. What is signified by the fact that the bread used specifically for Communion is only one loaf?

A. This signifies, according to the explanation of the apostle, that “we, who are many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

Q. What is the important action in the Liturgy?

A. Speaking the words that Jesus Christ spoke at the establishment of the mystery: “Take, eat; this is My body.... Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood, that of the new covenant” (Mt. 26:26-28); and then an invocation of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of the Gifts, that is, the bread and wine which are offered, with the words: “And make this bread the precious body of Thy Christ. And that which is in this cup the precious blood of Thy Christ. Changing them by Thy Holy Spirit.”

Q. Why is this important?

A. Because in this very action, the bread and wine are transformed, or transubstantiated, into the true body of Christ and into the true blood of Christ.

Q. How is the word transubstantiation to be understood?

A. In the statement of faith of the Eastern patriarchs it is said that the word "transubstantiation" does not explain the manner in which the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of the Lord, for it cannot be comprehended by anybody but God; but it only shows that truly, in actuality and essentially, the bread is the most true body of the Lord, and the wine is the blood of the Lord Himself.

Q. What is required of each person, especially those who want to participate in the Mystery of Holy Communion?

A. One must test his conscience before God and cleanse it by repentance of sins, which is assisted by fasting and prayer.

"Let a man examine himself, and thus let him eat of the bread and let him drink of the cup. For the one who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:28-29).

Q. What kind of benefit does one who partakes of the body and blood of Christ receive?

A. He is intimately united with Jesus Christ Himself and becomes a partaker of eternal life in Him.

"The one who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

"The one who partaketh of My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life" (John 6:54).

Q. How often should one partake of the Holy Mysteries?

A. The ancient Christians received Communion on every Sunday, but only a few of our contemporaries have such purity of life as to always be ready to approach such a great mystery. The Church instructs with a motherly voice those zealous for a pious life to confess

before a spiritual father and partake of the body and blood of Christ four times a year or even every month, but to all, certainly, at least once a year (see *Orthodox Confession*, Part 1, Q. 90).

Q. What participation in the divine Liturgy can those have who only listen and do not approach the Holy Communion?

A. They can and should participate in the Liturgy with prayer, faith, and most of all with ceaseless remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who commanded exactly this to be done in remembrance of Him (see Luke 22:19).

Q. Will the performance of the Mystery of Holy Communion in the true Church of Christ always continue?

A. Certainly, it will continue forever, until the very coming of Christ, according to the word of the Apostle Paul: "For as often as ye may eat this bread and drink this cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death until He should come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

About Repentance

Q. What is Repentance?

A. Repentance (Confession) is a mystery in which, by confessing his sins, with a visible gesture of forgiveness from the priest, one is invisibly loosed from his sins by Jesus Christ Himself.

Q. Where does this mystery come from?

A. First, many came to Saint John the Baptist, who proclaimed "a baptism of repentance toward remission of sins, and all were confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4-5). To the apostles Jesus Christ promised the power to forgive sins when He said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall have been bound in the heavens, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens" (Mt. 18:18). After His Resurrection, He gave them this

power in actuality when He said, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit: if ye forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven to them; if ye retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:22-23).

Q. What is required of one repenting?

A. Contrition for his sins, the intent to rectify his life, faith in Christ, and hope in His mercy.

“The sorrow in accordance with God worketh out repentance to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10).

“To this One,” that is, Jesus Christ, “all the prophets bear witness that, through His name, everyone who believeth in Him is to receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Q. Are there any other methods which prepare and assist one towards repentance?

A. Such means are fasting and prayer.

Q. Does the holy Church have another special remedy for cleansing and bringing peace to the conscience of a repentant sinner?

A. Such a remedy is an epitimia (penance).

Q. What is an epitimia?

A. The word means “punishment” (see 2 Cor. 2:6).

Under this name, according to necessity, certain additional, special pious exercises and privations are prescribed, serving to atone for the unrighteousness of the sin and to overcome sinful habits. One example is fasting more than what is required for all, and for grave sins, one is excommunicated from Holy Communion for a certain time.

Q. Have certain epitimias been imposed by the Church for various sins?

A. Yes, they were prescribed by the ecumenical councils, but in this present sinful time amid many temptations their penances are significantly reduced by spiritual confessors, which has

been allowed by some councils under the condition of contrite, tearful repentance and deeds of mercy, fasting, and prayers.

About the Priesthood

Q. What is the Priesthood?

A. Priesthood (Ordination) is a mystery in which one who was chosen rightly by the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands by a hierarch, is appointed to perform the mysteries and to shepherd the flock of Christ.

“Let a man so reckon us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1).

“Be taking heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit set you for Himself as bishops, to shepherd the Church of the Lord and God, which He preserved for Himself through His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Q. What does it mean to shepherd the Church?

A. To instruct people in faith, piety, and good works.

Q. How many essential degrees of the Priesthood are there?

A. Three: bishop, priest, and deacon.

Q. What is the difference between them?

A. The deacon serves (assists) in the mysteries; the priest performs the mysteries, subject to the bishop; the bishop not only performs the mysteries but even has the authority to endow upon others the grace-filled gift of the ability to perform the mysteries.

The Apostle Paul writes to Titus about the episcopal authority: “For this cause I left thee behind in Crete, in order that thou shouldest set right the things wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city” (Tit. 1:5).

And to Timothy: “Do not be laying hands quickly on anyone” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Q. What spiritual gift does an ordained shepherd receive?

A. The gift of co-suffering love towards his spiritual children, if he accepts the mystery with a pure intention to serve for the salvation of men and the glory of God.

Q. How does the Church teach about this?

A. Saint John Chrysostom writes about this gift of the Mystery of the Priesthood as follows: “Spiritual love does not give birth to anything earthly; it comes from above out of heaven and is given in the Mystery of the Priesthood, but the assimilation and retention of this gift also depends on the striving of the human spirit” (*Homilies on Colossians*).

About Marriage

Q. What is Marriage?

A. Marriage is a mystery in which, with the free promise of the groom and the bride of mutual fidelity before the priest and the Church, their conjugal union is blessed in the image of the spiritual union of Christ with the Church, and the couple asks for the grace to become purely of one soul in blessed birthgiving and raising children in a Christian manner.

Q. How is it clear that Marriage is a mystery?

A. From the following words of the Apostle Paul: “Because of this shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be into one flesh. This mystery is great; but I speak in regard to Christ and in regard to the Church” (Eph. 5:31-32).

Q. Should everyone get married?

A. No. Virginity is better than marriage, if one is able to keep it with purity.

This is what Jesus Christ said about this very state: “Not all find room for this saying, but those to whom it hath been given;...the one who is able to find room for it, let him make room” (Mt. 19:11-12).

And the apostle says, “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they should abide even as I. But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.... The unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, how he shall please the Lord. But he who is married careth for the things of the world, how he shall please his wife.... He who giveth his virgin in marriage doeth well; but he who giveth her not in marriage doeth better” (1 Cor. 7:8-9, 32-33, 38).

About Holy Unction

Q. What is Holy Unction?

A. Holy Unction is a mystery in which, anointing the body with specially blessed oil, the grace of God is conferred upon the sick for healing the infirmities of soul and body.

Q. Where does this mystery come from?

A. From the apostles, who, having received authority from Jesus Christ, were “anointing with oil many sick, and curing them” (Mk. 6:13).

The apostles handed down this mystery to the clergy of the Church, as can be seen from the following words of the Apostle Iakovos: “Is anyone among you infirm? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church; and let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the one who is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be one who hath committed sins, it shall be forgiven him” (Jas. 5:14-15).

On the Eleventh Article

Q. What is the resurrection of the dead, which, according to the Creed, we are looking for, or are expecting?

A. An action of the omnipotence of God, according to which the bodies of all those who have ever died, being joined again with their souls, will revive and will be spiritual and immortal.

“It is sown an animal body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). “For it is needful for this corruptible to put on itself incorruption and this mortal to put on itself immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53).

Q. How will a body that has rotted in the ground and scattered into dust be resurrected?

A. Since God created the body from the earth in the beginning, He can also renew what has been scattered into the earth. The Apostle Paul explains this by the likeness of a seed sown, which decays in the ground, but from which an herb or a tree grows: “That which thou sowest is not made alive unless it should die” (1 Cor. 15:36).

Q. Is it certain that everyone will be resurrected?

A. It is certain that all the dead will be resurrected; and for those who remain alive until the time of the general resurrection, their current gross bodies will instantly change into spiritual and immortal ones.

“On the one hand we shall not all fall asleep, but on the other hand we shall all be changed—in a moment, in a wink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For a trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Q. When will the dead be resurrected?

A. At the end of this visible world.

Q. Is that why the world will end?

A. This perishable world will end by being transformed into an imperishable one. “The creation itself also shall be freed from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of

the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

Q. In what condition are the souls of the dead before the general resurrection?

A. The souls of the righteous are in light, peace, and the destiny of eternal bliss; but the souls of sinners are in the opposite state.

Q. Why is not complete bliss immediately ascribed to the souls of the righteous?

A. Because the full reward for the works a man has done is predetermined to be received in full only after the resurrection of the body at the Last Judgment of God.

"We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of the Christ, in order that each one might receive for oneself the things done through the agency of the body, according to what one did, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Q. Why is the foretaste of blessedness attributed to them before the Last Judgment?

A. This is according to the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself, Who says in the parable that the righteous Lazarus was immediately after death carried into the bosom of Abraham (see Luke 16:22).

Q. What should be noted about the souls of those who died in the Faith but did not have time to bear fruit worthy of repentance?

A. That the prayers offered for them, especially those combined with the offering of the bloodless Sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, and good works performed by faith in their memory can help them to achieve a blessed resurrection.

Q. What is this teaching based on?

A. On the invariable Tradition of the Catholic Church, the beginnings of which are even visible in the Old Testament Church. Judas Maccabeus offered sacrifice for dead soldiers (2 Macc. 12:43). Prayer for the dead is always an indispensable part of the Divine Liturgy,

beginning with the Liturgy of the Apostle Iakovos. Saint Kyril of Jerusalem says, “Great benefit will occur for the souls for whom prayer is offered up while the Holy Things are presented in the Dread Sacrifice” (*Catecheses on the Mysteries*, 5, Ch. 9).

Saint Basil in his prayers at Pentecost says that the Lord grants us the privilege of accepting prayer, propitiation, and sacrifices from us “for those who are held in Hades, with the hope for them of peace, relaxation and freedom.”

About the Twelfth Article

Q. What is “the life of the age to come”?

A. Life after the resurrection of the dead and the universal Judgment of Christ.

Q. What will that life be like?

A. For believers who love God and do good, that life will be so blessed that we cannot now even imagine this blessedness.

“It was not yet made manifest what we shall be” (1 John 3:2).

“And I know such a man… was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not allowed for a man to speak” (2 Cor. 12:2, 4).

Q. Where will such bliss come from?

A. From the contemplation of God in light and glory, and from union with Him. “For now we see by means of a mirror, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall fully know even as I also was fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Q. Will the body also participate in the bliss of the soul?

A. It will also be glorified by the light of God, like the body of Jesus Christ during His Transfiguration on Tabor.

“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory” (1 Cor. 15:43).

“And even as we bore the image of the earthy (that is, Adam), let us also bear the image of the heavenly (that is, our Lord Jesus Christ)” (1 Cor. 15:49).

Q. Will everyone be equally blessed?

A. No. There will be different degrees of bliss according to our labors here in faith, love, and good deeds. “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differeth from star in glory” (1 Cor. 15:41-42).

Q. And what will happen to the unbelievers and the wicked?

A. They will be put to eternal death, or in other words, eternal fire, eternal torment, together with the devil.

“Go from Me, ye who have been cursed, into the fire, the everlasting one, which hath been prepared for the devil and his angels.... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” (Mt. 25:41, 46).

Q. Why is it so severe for sinners?

A. Not because God wanted them to perish, but they themselves perish “because they received not the love of the truth, in order for them to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10), that is, because of their impenitence.

Q. Is it possible to allow oneself to think that such hardened souls would be found who will not repent at the sight of the Judgment of the Lord?

A. Unfortunately, it is possible, because there were people who rejected and crucified Christ, although they saw His miracles and virtues: “Now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father” (John 15:24).

Q. What will be the torment of unrepentant sinners?

A. Mainly a torment of powerless rage, according to the word of Christ: “There shall be there the weeping and the gnashing of the teeth” (Mt. 13:42), and the gnashing of teeth in Scripture denotes powerless malice (see Ps. 34:16; 36:12; Acts 7:54).

Q. The eleventh and twelfth articles of the Creed are similar in content to the seventh; why are those thoughts previously expressed in the Creed repeated here?

A. There they are presented as an object of faith, but here as an object of the Christian’s joyful hope, with the word “look for,” that is, expect with great desire. This is how the book of the New Testament ends, with the words of the seer of mysteries, the Apostle John: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20).

Q. Why then do most people try not to think about death, and the judgment seat of Christ is called the Dread Judgment?

A. Some due to their attachment to the earth and indifference to faith, and others, who are more God-fearing, because of the consciousness of their sinfulness.

Q. In what sense do such people confess: “I look for the resurrection of the dead, etc.”?

A. In the sense that if a person were fully worthy of the title of Christian, then he would joyfully await the Second Coming of Christ, like the holy apostles and holy martyrs, who consoled themselves with these thoughts not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old, as the brother-martyrs of the Maccabees.

Q. What benefit can a person derive from meditations on death, on the resurrection, on the final Judgment, on eternal bliss and eternal torment?

A. These reflections help us to abstain from sins and to renounce attachment to earthly things; they comfort us in the deprivation of earthly goods, encourage us to keep the soul and body pure, to live for God and for eternal things, and thus to achieve eternal salvation.

“Be mindful of thine end, and thou wilt not sin unto the age” (Sir. 7:39).

Second Part of the Catechism: About Piety, or a Godly Life

Q. Having understood the basic truths of faith, can a Christian comfort himself with the assurance that he will surely save his soul?

A. By no means, since the Apostle Paul teaches us: “If I…know all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and if I have all the faith, so as to remove mountains from one place to another, but I have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2).

Q. According to this, is it possible to agree with the teaching which asserts that faith itself will propel a Christian to carry out podvigs of virtue and he does not need to struggle for this?

A. This doctrine is completely false, because “the demons also believe, and shudder” (Jas. 2:19).

Q. How is it evident that a believer, not being satisfied simply with his assent to the truths of divine revelation, must use his efforts in the struggle against sin and in the acquisition of virtues?

A. From the words of Christ: “The kingdom of the heavens is being taken by force, and the forceful seize it” (Mt. 11:12). Then, in the parable of the sower, the Lord explains that the grains that have fallen on good ground “are they who, after they hear the word with a noble and good heart, held fast and bore fruit in patience” (Lk. 8:15). The Apostle Paul, who is mistakenly referred to by the false teachers mentioned, writes even more clearly about the need to harness your will to achieve eternal life. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forth to those things which are before, I pursue toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

Q. How can we understand the apostle’s words that Abraham and Christians are justified by faith and not by the works of the Law (see Rom. 3:28; 4:3; Eph. 2:8-9)?

A. By the works of the Law, the Apostle Paul meant the ritual Law of Moses, which lost its meaning after our redemption by Christ the Savior, and by faith all the fullness of the

Christian grace-filled and holy life, as he himself explains in another epistle: “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision hath any strength, nor uncircumcision, but faith energizing itself through love,” or in the next chapter: “but a new creation” (Gal. 5:6; 6:15).

Q. Do not the Holy Scriptures give warnings about a wrong understanding of the Apostle Paul?

A. The Apostle Iakovos gives such warnings, explaining the insufficiency of one’s conviction in the truths of faith, and the Apostle Peter, pointing out that the Apostle Paul in all his epistles teaches Christians to be honoring “the long-suffering of the Lord” (that is, to imitate His patience) as our “salvation,” while “the unlearned and unstable twist” the teaching of the Apostle Paul “as they do also the rest of Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Q. What is the ultimate goal of that long-suffering and exertion, or podvig, by which Christians accomplish their salvation?

A. The complete destruction of their passions and, as stated at the beginning of the catechism, the attainment of holiness and communion with God.

The Lord Jesus Christ, having offered His listeners the highest virtue of love for enemies, concluded His discourse in this way: “Be perfect, even as your Father Who is in the heavens is perfect” (Mt. 5:48).

Q. What is the path to the gradual and feasible achievement of such perfection?

A. It is two-fold: the fight against sin, and the assimilation of the virtues and communion with God.

Q. What words of God should guide us in these labors?

A. The ceasing from sins is predominantly according to the Ten Commandments of God in the Old Testament, and the testimony of virtues is predominantly according to the nine commandments of the Gospel.

About the Commandments of Both Testaments in General

Q. What is common between the commandments of the Old and New Testaments, and why should one see in them the essence of the moral teaching God gave to man?

A. Both those and the other commandments were given by the mouth of God and under especially solemn conditions, and then were accompanied by many more additions and explanations from the Lord Who spoke.

Q. Under what conditions were the commandments of the Old Testament given?

A. When the Jewish people, descended from Abraham, were miraculously freed from the slavery of the Egyptians, then on the way to the promised land, in the wilderness, on Mount Sinai, God revealed His presence in fire and cloud and gave the Law through the leader of the Israelites, Moses.

Q. Under what conditions were the commandments of the New Testament given?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ, having ascended a high mountain, "stood upon a level place. And there was a crowd of His disciples, and a great multitude of the people from all of Judæa and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases—even those who were troubled by unclean spirits; and they were cured. And all the crowd was seeking to touch Him, for power was coming forth from Him and healing all. And He lifted up His eyes to His disciples, and began to say…" (Lk. 6:17-20).

Q. Did similar healings take place when God spoke the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament on Mount Sinai?

A. On the contrary, the Lord forbade Moses to allow a man or an animal to touch the foot of the mountain at this time, because otherwise they must immediately be put to death.

Q. Do the Old Testament commandments represent only the prohibition of sins, and the New Testament commandments represent only the praise of virtue?

A. No; firstly, the fourth and fifth commandments of the Old Testament also contain the prescriptions of virtues, and then a more sincere perception by the human heart of the prohibitions of the Old Testament and the Beatitudes of the New Testament reveals to him those opposite acts and feelings that are prescribed by the prohibitions of sins and are prohibited by the Beatitudes of virtue.

Q. What is the name of that power in the soul of man, which explains to us the commandments of God in this way?

A. It is called the conscience or internal law.

Q. Does Scripture speak about an inner law?

A. The Apostle Paul says about the nations: “The work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts one with another accusing or also excusing” (Rom. 2:15).

Q. If there is an internal law in humanity, then why is the external law given also?

A. It is given because men did not obey the inner law and, leading a carnal and sinful life, drowned out the voice of the spiritual law. That is why it was necessary to remind them of it externally, by means of the commandments.

“Why then the Law? It was added on account of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19).

Q. Did the sons of the Old Testament understand that abstinence from sins does not exhaust the will of God?

A. Undoubtedly they understood, because when the Lord asked the scribe what is the main commandment of the Law of Moses leading to eternal life, he answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself” (Lk. 10:27).

Q. Who else answered the question about the greatest commandment of the Law with the same words?

A. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself (see Matthew 22:36-40).

Q. Are all men our neighbors?

A. Everyone. Because everyone is a creation of one God and descended from one man. But those who are united in Faith are especially close to us, as children of the one heavenly Father by faith in Jesus Christ.

Q. What should be the order in love for God, for one's neighbor, and for oneself?

A. One should love oneself only for God and partly for one's neighbors; one must love one's neighbors for God, but one must love God for God Himself and above all else. Love for oneself should be sacrificed for the love for our neighbors; love for oneself and for neighbors should be sacrificed for love for God.

"Greater love hath no one than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"The one who loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37).

On the Commandments of the Old Testament

Q. Is it possible to find in the commandments of the Old Testament precisely these two main commandments?

A. It is possible, since the Ten Commandments forbid sins contrary to love for God and love for our neighbor: the first four commandments concern love for God, and the last six—love for our neighbor.

Q. How were the commandments passed on to the people of Israel?

A. The Lord Himself originally inscribed them on two stone tablets.

Q. How can it be seen that in the words of the Lord setting forth His law, He divided them precisely into ten main commandments?

A. From the words of the same holy Book of Exodus, where they are called the Decalogue (see Ex. 34:28); then these commandments are repeated with all accuracy in Deuteronomy (see Deut. 5), where it is said that the tablets with the Decalogue were placed forever in the Ark of the Covenant by the command of God, which was the main shrine of the people of God.

Q. How are these commandments read?

A. 1) “I am the Lord thy God, Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me.”

2) “Thou shalt not make to thyself an idol, nor likeness of anything, whatever things are in the heaven above, and whatever are in the earth beneath, and whatever are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them.”

3) “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord thy God will not acquit him that takes His name in vain.”

4) “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labor and shalt perform all thy work. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.”

5) “Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the good land, which the Lord thy God gives to thee.”

6) “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

7) “Thou shalt not steal.”

8) “Thou shalt not kill (murder).”

9) “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

10) “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, nor his field, nor his servant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any of his livestock, nor anything that belongs to thy neighbor” (Ex. 20:2-17).

Q. If these commandments were given to the people of Israel, then do we also need to act according to them?

A. We must, because in their essence they are the same law which, according to the Apostle Paul, was written in the hearts of all men, so that everyone would follow it.

Q. Did Jesus Christ teach people to walk according to the Ten Commandments?

A. He commanded that, in order to obtain eternal life, one ought to keep the commandments, and He taught us to understand and fulfill them more perfectly than they had been understood before His incarnation (see Matthew 19:17; 5).

On the First Commandment

Q. What is the meaning of the words “I am the Lord thy God”?

A. With these words, God, as it were, points Himself out to man and, consequently, commands him to recognize the Lord God.

Q. What special duties are derived from the command to know God?

A. 1) One should study the knowledge of God as the most important of all knowledge.

2) One should diligently listen to the teaching about God and His works in the church and engage in pious conversations about this also outside the church.

3) One should read or listen to books that teach the knowledge of God: firstly, the Holy Scriptures, and secondly, the writings of the holy fathers.

Q. What is forbidden in the words “Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me”?

A. 1) Atheism, or disbelief, when people—whom the psalmist justly calls fools—wanting to get rid of the fear of God's judgment, say there is no God in their hearts (Ps. 13:1), or when, recognizing that God is, do not believe in His providence and revelation.

2) Heresy, when men mix opinions contrary to divine truth with the teachings of the Faith.

3) Schism, that is, willful deviation from the unity of worshipping God and from the Orthodox Catholic Church of God.

4) Apostasy, when men renounce the true Faith out of human fear or for worldly gain.

5) Despair, when people do not at all hope to receive grace and salvation from God.

6) Magic, when, leaving faith in the power of God, men believe in the secret and, for the most part, evil forces of created beings and, especially, evil spirits, and try to operate with them.

7) Superstition, when men believe in some ordinary thing as if it had divine power, and instead of God, they hope upon or fear it. For example, they believe in an old book and think that it is only possible to be saved by it, and not by a new one, although the new one contains the same teaching and the same divine service.

8) Man-pleasing, when people please men in such a way that they do not care about pleasing God.

9) Hoping upon man, when someone relies on the abilities and strength of himself or other people, and not on the mercy and help of God.

Q. Why should one think that man-pleasing and hoping upon man is contrary to the first commandment?

A. Because the person whom we please or on whom we hope, to the point of forgetting God, is in some way for us another god instead of the true God.

Q. How does the Holy Scripture talk about man-pleasing?

A. The Apostle Paul says, "For if I were yet trying to please men, I should not be a slave of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Q. How does the Holy Scripture talk about hoping upon man?

A. The Lord says about this: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and will lean his arm of flesh upon him, while his heart departs from the Lord” (Jer. 17:5).

Q. How does the Scripture teach about superstition and, in particular, about magic and the summoning of the dead?

A. Both are considered grave sins and the Law of Moses commands the stoning of a man or woman who summons the dead or those who practice magic (see Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:11); magic was denounced by the Prophets Isaias, Ezekiel, and others.

Q. Are there warnings against superstition in the New Testament?

A. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: Be “nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which thou hast followed closely. But be rejecting profane and old women’s fables, and be exercising thyself toward piety” (1 Tim. 4:6-7).

On the Second Commandment

Q. What is this “graven image” referred to in the second commandment?

A. In this very commandment it is explained that a graven image, or an idol, is an image of some creature living in heaven, or on earth, or in the waters, which is worshiped and served instead of God.

Q. What does the second commandment prohibit?

A. It forbids the worship of idols as imaginary deities or as images of false gods.

Q. Is it not forbidden through this to have any sacred images whatsoever?

A. In this commandment there is no such prohibition, since the same Moses, through whom God gave a commandment prohibiting idols, at the same time received from God the

command to place in the tabernacle, the movable Jewish temple, golden sacred images of cherubim, and moreover this was in the inner part of the temple in which the people turned to worship God.

Q. Why is this example noteworthy for the Orthodox Christian Church?

A. Because it explains the correctness of the use of holy icons in the Orthodox Church.

Q. What is an icon?

A. This word from the Greek means “form” or “image.” In the Orthodox Church, this name refers to the sacred images of God Who appeared in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, His most pure Mother, and His saints.

Q. Is the use of holy icons in accordance with the second commandment?

A. It would not be agreeable with it only if someone began to idolize them. According to this commandment, it is not at all contradictory to venerate icons as sacred images and use them for reverent remembrance of the deeds of God and His saints, since in this case the icons are books written by faces and objects instead of letters (see St. Gregory the Great, “Letter 9 to Bishop Serenus of Marseilles”).

Q. Does the holy Church teach concerning this?

A. Yes, she specially assembled the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which approved the veneration of icons, for which many saints suffered martyrically from heretics (iconoclasts) who rejected the veneration of holy icons and holy relics.

Q. In what disposition of soul should one be in when venerating icons?

A. He who looks at them must look with his mind to God and the saints who are depicted on them.

Q. What is the general name of the sin against the second commandment?

A. Idolatry.

Q. What does spiritual idolatry mean?

A. The love of a creature more than God, which usually leads a person to the violation of the holy commandments and often to apostasy from the Faith.

The excessive and unreasonable admiration for contemporary modes of thought and fashionable teachings and the deviation for their sake from the doctrine of truth is the same sin. The Apostle Paul warns Christians against this: “Be wary lest there shall be anyone who leadeth you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8). The Apostle John predicted this: At some point the beast hostile to Christ (the Antichrist and his teaching) would become strong upon the earth, “and all those dwelling on the earth shall make obeisance to him—everyone whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb, the One having been slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

Q. Are those who reject the veneration of icons justified in referring to the prohibition in the Book of Deuteronomy against depicting God in the form of a man, or a woman, or any other creature (see Deut. 4:15-18)?

A. If the Jews who were always inclined to idolatry were not forbidden, then this prohibition, like the entire ritual Law, for example, circumcision and the sabbath, was abolished by the redemption of Christ; therefore our Savior, repeating the commandments to the rich young man, did not mention these words of the second commandment.

Q. But in that case there was only mention of the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th commandments; did the Lord confirm the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 10th?

A. He did confirm them: the 1st in response to the teacher of the law on the question, “what is the greatest commandment in the Law”; the 3rd when He taught against swearing; the 4th, when He explained its meaning while He was performing healings on the sabbath; the 10th

when denouncing contemplation of someone else's woman, and in the parable of equal pay to the workers in the vineyard.

Q. How does the Church teach about the attitude of Jesus Christ towards the veneration of icons.

A. She preaches everywhere the tradition of Jesus Christ producing an "Image Not Made by Hands" by wiping His face with a napkin and how it was a gift to the King of Edessa, Abgar, who, having received this, was healed of a disease. In memory of this event, the feast day of the Image Not Made by Hands (August 16) has been established since ancient times.

On the Third Commandment

Q. How does it happen that the name of God is pronounced in vain (to no purpose)?

A. It comes about in useless and vain conversations, and all the more to no purpose when pronounced falsely or irreverently.

Q. What sins are prohibited by the third commandment?

A. 1) Blasphemy, or bold words against God.

2) Murmuring against God, or complaining about His providence.

3) Making sacred subjects into a joke or a mockery.

4) Inattention in prayer.

5) Perjury, when someone affirms an oath that is not true.

6) Oath-breaking, when a just and lawful oath is not fulfilled.

7) Breaking vows made to God.

8) Swearing, or the frivolous use of an oath in ordinary conversations.

Q. Is there any special provision in the Holy Scriptures banning swearing in conversations?

A. The Savior says, “But I say to you not to swear at all: neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God,…but let your word ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and ‘no,’ ‘no’; and what is more than these is from the evil one” (Mt. 5:34, 37).

Q. Does this forbid one to take any oath in public affairs?

A. The Apostle Paul says: “For men indeed swear by the greater, and the oath for confirmation is to them an end of all contradiction. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, mediated by an oath” (Heb. 6:16).

From this we must conclude that if God Himself used an oath for an immutable assurance, then all the more is it allowed and we should, in important and necessary cases, at the request of a legitimate authority, use a vow and oath with reverence and with a firm intention not to change it at all.

Q. Did the holy angels and holy apostles use oaths?

A. In the Apocalypse, Saint John saw the angel who “swore by the One living to the ages of the ages, Who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in her, and the sea and the things in her, that there shall be time no longer” (Rev. 10:6). Apostle Paul repeatedly in his epistles called on God as a witness to the truthfulness of his words, for example: “God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:8).

Q. When is an oath allowed?

A. Swearing under oath—when it is necessary for the common good to establish the credibility of a man’s testimony, for example, in court; and a sworn vow—when it is necessary to strengthen a man’s will in goodness and truth, so that he does not depart from it, remembering that in this case he would be not only a liar, but also an oath-breaker. Such is the oath when accepting Church orders, primarily the episcopal, and also military and civil offices.

On the Fourth Commandment

Q. Why is the seventh and not some other day supposed to be dedicated to God?

A. Because God in six days created the world, and on the seventh He rested from the works of creation.

Q. Is the sabbath (Saturday) celebrated in the Christian Church?

A. It is not celebrated as a special feast day; however, in commemoration of the creation of the world and in continuation of the original rest of God, it differs from other days by a relief from fasting.

Q. How is the fourth commandment fulfilled in the Christian Church?

A. It is celebrated every seventh day, but not on the last of the seven days, which is the sabbath, but on the first day of each week, Sunday.

Q. Since when was Sunday celebrated?

A. Since the very time of the Resurrection of Christ.

Q. Does the Scripture mention the celebration of Sunday?

A. The book of the Acts of the Apostles mentions the gathering of disciples, that is, Christians, on the first day of the week, or on Sunday, for the breaking of bread, that is, for the celebration of the Mystery of Communion (see Acts 20:7). The Apostle and Evangelist John in the Apocalypse also mentions “the Lord’s day,” or Sunday (see Rev. 1:10).

Q. Should not the name of the seventh day, or sabbath, be understood to be other days as well?

A. Just as in the old testament Church the other days established for celebration or fasting, such as the feast of Passover, the day of purification, were also understood under the name of

sabbath, so in the Christian Church, apart from Sunday, other established feast days and fasts are to be observed for the glory of God and in honor of the most holy Theotokos and other saints (see *Orthodox Confession*, Part 3, Q. 60, Part 1, Q. 88).

Q. So the fourth commandment of the Old Testament does not contain the prohibition of sin, but the prescription of piety?

A. It contains both in the Bible; here it was presented in abbreviated form, and its full exposition reads as follows: “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days thou shalt labor, and shalt perform all thy work. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; on it thou shalt do no work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy servant nor thy maidservant, thine ox nor thine ass, nor any cattle of thine, nor the stranger that sojourns with thee. For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and the sea and all things in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:8-11).

Q. Referring the teaching on the virtue of prayer to the Beatitudes, point here to those external differences that the new testament Church prescribes for Christians on feast days.

A. First, one should not work on these days, or do worldly and everyday affairs; secondly, one must keep them holy, that is, use them for holy and spiritual deeds, to the glory of God.

Q. Why is it forbidden to work on feast days?

A. Because they should be used for holy and God-pleasing deeds.

Q. What exactly is appropriate to do on holidays (holy days)?

A. 1) Come to church for public worship and the teaching of the word of God.

2) Outside the temple to engage in prayer, reading, or soul-saving conversations.

3) Dedicate a part of your property to God and use it for the needs of the Church and those serving her and for the benefit of the poor, visit the sick and those imprisoned, and do other deeds of Christian love.

Q. But should not such things be done on work days, too?

A. It is well for whoever can do it. And whoever is hindered by his work should at least consecrate feast days with such deeds. Prayer, of course, must be done every day, morning and evening, before and after lunch and dinner, and, if possible, at the beginning and end of every task.

Q. What should be thought of those who, on feast days, allow themselves immodest games and spectacles, secular songs, and intemperance in food and drink?

A. Such people greatly insult the sanctity of the feast days. If works that are innocent and useful for this temporal life are not befitting on the days of the saints, then all the more are those works useless which are fleshly and passionate.

Q. When the fourth commandment speaks of doing work for six days, does it condemn those who do nothing at all?

A. No doubt it does condemn those who, on ordinary days, do not engage in labor worthy of their rank but spend their time in idleness and amusement.

Q. What punishment does the Church impose on those who do not come to church for prayer and do not observe the holy fasts?

A. About the first—the Apostolic Canons command to excommunicate such a Christian who, having no insurmountable obstacles, has not attended the Divine Liturgy for three weeks in a row; concerning the second—as affirmed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council, those who do not fast on Wednesday and Friday and for the holy forty days (Great Lent) should be excommunicated from Holy Communion for two years.

Q. What should one say to deniers of fasting who say that Jesus Christ did not establish fasts?

A. That they are not telling the truth, because the Lord said about His followers, “Days will come, whenever the bridegroom shall have been taken away from them, and then shall they fast” (Mt. 9:15). Therefore, Christians fast on Wednesday and Friday—the days of Christ’s betrayal and death.

Q. What other fasts are established for Christians?

A. The Great, Apostles’, Dormition, and Nativity Fasts, as well as the day of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist and the day of the Exaltation of the Holy and Life-giving Cross of the Lord.

Q. Has the Lord promised a crown for those who struggle in fasting in this age and in the future?

A. He did indeed promise this when He spoke about unhypocritical fasting: “Thy Father Who seeth in secret, shall render what is due to thee openly” (Mt. 6:18); when the disciples asked the Lord why they could not drive out the demon from the young man brought to them, He answered, “Because of your unbelief.... This kind goeth not out except by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:20-21); from these words of Christ it is clear that fasting with prayer increases the faith of a Christian and gives him power over unclean spirits.

On the Fifth Commandment

Q. So the fifth commandment does not consist of prohibition, but of admonition and command?

A. Quite so; the Apostle Paul points to this, recounting it: “‘Be honoring thy father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with a promise” (Eph. 6:2).

Q. Why did the Lord lay down this commandment differently from the other commandments?

A. Because of its feasibility, since natural humanity, by its very nature, performs it; even animals have affection and obedience to father and mother. Therefore, those who violate this commandment act “worse than cattle.”

Q. How grievous is it for those who violate this commandment?

A. It is so grievous that the Lord, in the same speech in which He gave the Ten Commandments, says, “He that reviles his father or his mother shall surely die” (Ex. 21:17).

The Lord Jesus Christ mentioned these words to the Pharisees who weakened the meaning of this commandment (see Mt. 15:6).

Q. What special obligations does the fifth commandment prescribe in one’s relation to his parents, under the general title of honoring them?

A. 1) Love them and treat them respectfully.

2) Obey them.

3) Take care of them during illness and old age.

4) After their death, as well as during their life, pray for the salvation of their souls and faithfully fulfill their wills that are not contrary to the law of God (see 2 Mac. 12:43-44; Jer. 35:18-19; Saint John Damascene, *A Word About the Dead*).

Q. Why is the promise of prosperity and long life predominantly added to the commandment to honor one’s parents?

A. In order to more strongly induce, by an obvious reward, the fulfillment of such a commandment, on which first of all the order of family life and then all of societal life is established.

Q. How is this promise fulfilled?

A. Examples of the ancient patriarchs or forefathers show that God gives special power to the blessing of parents (see Genesis 27). “The blessing of the father establishes the homes of children” (Sir. 3:9). God, according to His wise and righteous providence, especially

preserves the life and arranges the welfare of those honoring their parents upon earth; to the perfect reward of perfect virtue, bestows an immortal and blessed life in the heavenly fatherland.

Q. If this commandment has in mind the affirmation of the family, then what other kind of love and faithfulness is implied in it?

A. Matrimonial.

Q. How does Scripture teach about the obligations of husband and wife?

A. “Husbands, be loving your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25). “Wives, be subordinating yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the Church, and is Himself Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:22-23).

Q. Why do the commandments that prescribe love for others mention parents before anyone else?

A. Because our parents are naturally the closest to us.

Q. Does the fifth commandment signify anyone else under the name of parents?

A. We must understand it to mean all who in various respects take the place of parents for us.

Q. Who then takes the place of parents for us?

A. 1) Spiritual shepherds and teachers, because they beget us in the spiritual life by teaching and through the mysteries and educate us in it, which is why they are called spiritual fathers. The Apostle Paul writes: “For if ye have myriads of tutors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begot you through the Gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15).

2) Those who govern our fatherland, especially if they have the royal dignity, in which they are consecrated through the Mystery of Chrismation.

3) Seniors according to age.

4) Teachers and educators.

5) Those having authority over us in different ways.

Q. How does the Holy Scripture talk about obedience to authorities?

A. “Let every soul be subject to authorities which govern. For there is no authority except from God; and the existing authorities have been appointed by God. So that the one who sets himself against the authority hath withstood the ordinance of God; and they who have withstood shall receive judgment to themselves” (Romans 13:1-2).

“My son, fear thou the Lord and the king: and associate not with the rebels” (Proverbs 24:21).

“Be fearing God, be honoring the king” (1 Pet. 2:17).

Q. How does Holy Scripture speak about reverence for pastors and spiritual teachers?

A. “Be obedient to those who lead you, and keep on submitting, for they are watchful for your souls, as those about to render an account, that they may do this with joy, and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17).

Q. Is there a special instruction in the Holy Scriptures to honor those older in age?

A. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:32).

Q. What does Scripture prescribe about responsibilities in relation to leaders of various kinds?

A.”Render then to all their dues: to whom the tribute is due, the tribute; to whom the customs duty, the toll; to whom the fear, the fear; to whom the honor, the honor” (Rom. 13:7).

Q. How does Scripture teach about the subordination of slaves to their masters?

A. “Household slaves, be subject in all fear to your masters, not only to the good and fair, but also to the crooked” (1 Pet. 2:18).

Q. If Scripture prescribes obligations towards one’s parents, does it not also prescribe obligations towards one’s children?

A. It also prescribes obligations towards one’s children, in accordance with the title of parents. “Fathers, cease provoking your children, but be nurturing them in the instruction and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

Q. How does the Holy Scripture talk about the obligation of shepherds to their spiritual flock?

A. “Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising the episcopal office, not by constraint, but willingly, not for sordid greed of gain, but readily, neither as exercising lordship over the clergy, but becoming examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Q. How does Scripture talk about the obligation of rulers and masters?

A. “Masters, keep on providing to the slaves that which is just and that which is equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in the heavens” (Col. 4:1).

Q. What should be done if it happens that one’s parents or superiors require something contrary to the Faith or the law of God?

A. Then we must tell them what the apostles said to the rulers of the Jews: “Whether it is right before the face of God to hearken to you rather than God, judge ye” (Acts 4:19). And we must endure everything for the Faith and the law of God, no matter what the consequences are.

On the Sixth Commandment

Q. What is prohibited by the sixth commandment?

A. Murder, or taking the life of a neighbor, in whatever way.

Q. What other circumstances are related to lawless murder?

A. In addition to direct murder, by whatever weapon, the following similar cases are related to the same crime:

1) When a judge condemns a defendant whose innocence is known to him.

2) When someone harbors or frees a murderer and thus gives him an opportunity for more murders.

3) When someone could deliver a neighbor from death but does not do it, as for example, if a rich man allows the poor to die of hunger.

4) When someone exhausts his subordinates with excessive labors and cruel punishments and thus hastens their death.

5) When someone shortens his own life by intemperance or other vices.

Q. How should suicide be judged?

A. It is the most criminal of murders because if it is contrary to nature to kill another person like us, then it is even more contrary to nature to kill yourself. Our life does not belong to us, like property, but to God Who gave it.

Q. How should duels to resolve private feuds be judged?

A. Since it is the government's business to resolve private disputes, but instead, the dueler willfully decides on such a matter in which there will certainly be death for both him and his rival, then two terrible crimes are involved in a duel: murder and suicide.

Q. Besides bodily murder, is there spiritual murder?

A. Spiritual murder is carried out through temptation, when someone seduces a neighbor into unbelief or iniquity, and thereby exposes that one's soul to spiritual death.

The Savior says: "But whosoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be to his advantage that a millstone turned by an ass were hung upon his neck, and he were drowned in the deep of the sea" (Mt. 18:6).

Q. Are there still subtler types of murder?

A. To a certain extent, this sin includes all deeds and words that are contrary to love and unrighteously disturb the peace and safety of a neighbor, and, finally, inner hatred against another, even if it is not revealed.

"Everyone who hateth his brother is a manslayer" (1 John 3:15).

Q. If murder is sinful, as an expression of hatred, is it permissible when it is done in accordance not out of hatred but some other kind of impulse?

A. It is still reprehensible, for then it is self-will, for which men have not received permission from the Lord.

Q. In the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," are not war and the death penalty prohibited?

A. The commandment prohibits only killing out of hatred or arbitrariness, since the continuation of the Lord's speech after the Decalogue commands to put to death not only murderers but also those who slander father or mother, and even those people who were knowingly keeping a butting ox if it gores a person (see Isaiah 21).

Q. Is it therefore permissible for Christians to participate in war?

A. Although war is a great evil, the refusal of individuals or societies to participate in it produces even more because it is the cause of internal war, as history and modernity testify.

Q. What should one think about the death penalty, through which the offender is often deprived of the opportunity to repent of his sinful life?

A. The death penalty is also a great evil, but it is permissible in cases where it is the only means to stop more numerous killings, for example, during a military uprising.

Q. Is there a clear statement about war?

A. In the canonical epistle of Saint Athanasius the Great to Ammun the monk similar thoughts are expressed about war.

Q. What should be thought of an involuntary killer? Why is Church penance imposed on him?

A. For not taking precautions to eliminate the possibility of an accident.

Q. But sometimes he is not guilty of this either.

A. Then he accepts a lesser penance to test his conscience with the question: Did not God allow this misfortune to occur due to his previous sins?

On the Seventh Commandment

Q. What is prohibited by the seventh commandment?

A. Fornication.

Q. What kinds of sins are prohibited under the name of fornication?

A. 1) Unlawful carnal love between people who are not married.

2) Adultery, when those who are married lawlessly turn away their love for their spouse toward strangers.

3) Incest, when through a union resembling marriage, close relatives unite.

4) Masturbation, or malakiya, when this sin is indulged in alone.

Q. How does the Savior teach concerning fornication?

A. He said, “Everyone who looketh on a woman in order to lust after her did already commit adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:28).

Q. What must be observed in order not to fall into such a subtle, internal adultery?

A. It is necessary to flee everything that can arouse unclean feelings in the heart, such as: voluptuous songs, dances, foul language, immodest games and jokes, immodest spectacles, and reading books in which impure love is described in an appealing way. One should try to live according to the Gospel and not look at what tempts.

“If thy right eye cause thee to stumble, remove it and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna” (Mt. 5:29).

Q. Is it really necessary to pluck out the stumbling eye?

A. It is necessary to pull it out not by hand, but by the will. He who has firmly decided not to look at what entices has already ripped out the seducing eye from himself.

Q. How is it clear that the Church understands the words of Christ in this way, and not literally?

A. From the fact that, according to canonical rules, she excommunicates those who have castrated themselves from Communion for a certain period, and then, having received the one who repented, does not allow him to join the clergy.

Q. What motivations does Scripture provide to flee fornication and live a chaste life?

A. It commands our bodies to be kept pure, because they are members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Spirit, and says that, on the contrary, the fornicator sins against his own

body, that is, corrupts it, infects it with diseases, and damages even the mental faculties, such as imagination and memory (see 1 Cor. 6:15, 18-19).

On the Eighth Commandment

Q. What is generally prohibited by the eighth commandment?

A. Theft, or appropriation in some way of what belongs to others.

Q. What particular sins are prohibited by the eighth commandment?

A. In general:

1) Robbery, or the taking of someone else's property, obviously by violence.

2) Theft, or stealing someone else's possessions in secret.

3) Deception, or the appropriation of something from someone else by cunning, when, for example, people give a false coin instead of a true one, a bad product instead of a good one, they give a lesser quantity than what was purchased, hide their property in order not to pay debts, do not fulfill their agreed obligations, or when people hide a perpetrator of theft and thus deprive the victim of restitution.

4) Sacrilege, or the appropriation of what is dedicated to God and what belongs to the Church.

5) Spiritual sacrilege, when some betray, while others seize sacred positions not according to their merit, but according to their selfish avarice.

6) Bribery, when a man takes a bribe from subordinates or defendants, and according to their own self-interest they elevate the unworthy, justify the guilty, or oppress the innocent.

7) Parasitism, when men receive a salary for a position or a payment for work but the position or work is not performed, and thus they steal their salary or wages and and also deprive society or their employer of the assistance the worker could have rendered. Likewise, it occurs when those who have the power to earn a living by their labors instead live on hand-outs or charity.

8) Usury, when, under the guise of a certain law or right, but in fact in violation of justice and philanthropy, people turn to their advantage someone else's property, or someone else's labor, or even the very misfortunes of their neighbors; for example, when lenders burden debtors with interest, when rulers exhaust those who depend on them with excessive taxes or labor, when in times of famine they sell bread at an exorbitant price.

Q. To what sin did self-interest and petty theft lead Judas Iscariot?

A. Unto the betrayal of his divine Teacher, after which he was seized by despair that ended in suicide.

On the Ninth Commandment

Q. What is prohibited by the ninth commandment?

A. False testimony against one's neighbor, as well as all lies.

Q. What is prohibited under the name of false testimony?

A. 1) False judicial evidence, when someone in court is testified against, reported, or complained about falsely.

2) False testimony, outside of the court, when someone is slandered in absentia or someone is blamed unfairly to the face.

Q. Is it not permissible to lie when there is no intention to harm our neighbor?

A. No, because it does not agree with love and respect for one's neighbor and is not worthy of man, and especially a Christian, as created for truth and love.

"Wherefore, having put off the falsehood, 'Be speaking truth each one with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

On the Tenth Commandment

Q. What is prohibited by the tenth commandment?

A. Desires that are contrary to love for one's neighbor, and, what is inseparable from these desires, thoughts that are contrary to this love.

Q. Why are not only bad deeds forbidden but also bad desires and thoughts?

A. First, because when the soul has bad desires and thoughts, then it is already unclean before God and unworthy of Him, as Solomon says, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord; but the words of the pure are pleasant words" (Proverbs 15:26), and therefore it is necessary to cleanse ourselves from these internal stains, as the apostle teaches: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, bringing to perfection holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Secondly, because in order to prevent sinful deeds, it is necessary to suppress sinful desires and thoughts, from which, as from seeds, sinful deeds will be born, as it is said, "Out of the heart cometh forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies" (Mt. 15:19). "But each is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own desire. Then after he conceiveth the desire, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, after it is fully formed, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15).

Q. Since it is forbidden to desire anything that a neighbor has, what passion is forbidden by this?

A. Envy.

Q. What is forbidden by the words "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife"?

A. Voluptuous thoughts and desires, or internal adultery, are prohibited.

Q. What is forbidden by the words “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, nor his servant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that belongs to thy neighbor”?

A. Greedy and power-hungry thoughts and desires.

Q. Why is this especially sinful?

A. Because it reveals a person’s addiction to earthly contentment, an indifferent attitude towards spiritual perfection, and discontent with providence, which has given our neighbor a better position than us.

Q. What calamities and crimes in the world are the result of envy?

A. Firstly, the fall and death of all men, and secondly, deicide, that is, the betrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ to death by His enemies.

Q. How does Scripture testify to this?

A. “Through the envy of the devil, death entered the world,” says the Wise (Wis. 2:24). The Gospel speaks thus of Pilate, the ruler of Judea: “He was perceiving that the chief priests had delivered Him (that is, Christ) up by reason of envy” (Mark 15:10).

Q. What disaster has been the fruit of envy in recent times?

A. Revolt, or the revolution of 1917 with all its terrible consequences: murders, robberies, civil strife and godless sacrilege, blasphemy and hatred of the clergy.

About the Commandments of the New Testament

Q. What are the essential commandments of the New Testament?

A. The following nine:

1. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.”

2. “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

3. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

4. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

5. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

6. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

7. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

8. “Blessed are they who have been persecuted on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.”

9. “Blessed are ye whenever they reproach you and persecute you, and say every evil word against you falsely on account of Me. Be rejoicing and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in the heavens” (Mt. 5:3-12).

Q. What should be noted about all these sayings in order to understand them correctly?

A. The Lord offered in these words the doctrine of attaining blessedness, as the Gospel says: “He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying…” (Mt. 5:2). But being meek and lowly in heart, He offered His teaching not as a command, but offering a recompense to those who freely accept and fulfill it. Therefore, in each saying about blessedness, one must consider: first, the teaching, or the commandment, and secondly, gratification, or the promise of a reward.

Q. Did the New Testament commandments abolish the Old Testament commandments?

A. On the contrary, in addition to two modifications to the fulfillment of the commandments two and four, that is, the introduction of the veneration of icons and Sunday, Christians are obliged to fulfill the entire law of the Ten Commandments.

Q. How does the Lord say this?

A. In His discourse on the Beatitudes, the Lord continued as follows: “Do not begin to think that I came to abolish the Law or the prophets; I came not to abolish, but to fulfill” (Mt. 5:17).

Q. Apart from His own meekness, what prompted the Lord to offer His commandments not in the form of prohibitions or orders, but in the form of Beatitudes?

A. The fact that the beauty of the listed virtues is so close to human hearts that, upon hearing about them, they themselves would be moved to follow the saving path of beatitude. In this sense, the Apostle Iakovos calls the law of the New Testament the law of freedom (see James 1:25).

Q. Was there any foretelling of this new law of freedom in the Old Testament?

A. The prophets repeatedly foretold the coming of this law, beginning with Moses, but the Prophet Jeremiah is clearer than others: “After those days, saith the Lord, I will surely put My laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people” (Jer. 31:33).

Q. Does only one of the four Gospels contain the Beatitudes?

A. No, they are in two: in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke.

Q. In which Gospel are the words more accurate?

A. The Church believes that the words of God are set forth equally accurately in all the holy books and that the Lord said everything as recorded by the evangelists, but some evangelists wrote down some of the words of the Lord, and others—other words.

Q. How is this to be understood?

A. The teaching of the Lord did not occur as one long, uninterrupted speech. He spoke among a huge crowd of people, and, of course, as a teacher in front of His disciples, He repeated the same thought several times, clarifying it and modifying it for the most

convenient understanding of the simple people, who interrupted His discourse with questions.

Q. Have we not preserved a record of any speech of Christ with its repetitions and explanations?

A. More than one has survived: such a one, for example, is His farewell conversation with the disciples (Jn. 13:31-17:26), which was interrupted by their questions and His evidentiary explanations.

Conditions for Fulfilling the Beatitudes

Q. What is the main vehicle for strengthening oneself in following the virtues outlined in the Beatitudes?

A. This vehicle is prayer. It 1) restores in us the vision of beauty and the desire for the virtues and 2) attracts the facilitating grace of God for its attainment.

Q. Is there evidence from God's word that prayer is a means of acquiring empowering grace?

A. Jesus Christ Himself unites prayer with the hope of achieving what is asked for, saying, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, this will I do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

Q. What is prayer?

A. The lifting up of the mind and heart to God, which is expressed as reverent words of man to God.

Q. What should a Christian do when lifting his mind and heart to God?

A. First, glorify Him for His divine perfections; second, thank Him for His benevolent works; third, ask Him for your needs. Hence the three main types of prayers: praise, thanksgiving, and petition.

Q. Can you pray without words?

A. You can: with your mind and heart. An example of this can be seen in Moses before crossing the Red Sea (see Ex. 14:15).

Q. Does such prayer have a special name?

A. It is called spiritual, or noetic and of the heart, in a word, interior prayer; since, on the other hand, prayer spoken in words and accompanied by other signs of reverence is called oral, or external, prayer.

Q. Can there be an outer prayer without an inner one?

A. It is possible when someone says the words of a prayer without attention and zeal.

Q. Is such an external prayer satisfactory to receive grace?

A. Not only is it not satisfactory to receive grace, but an external prayer, without internal participation, actually angers God.

God Himself expresses indignation at such a prayer: “This people draweth nigh to Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they reverence Me” (Mt. 15:8-9).

Q. Then is inner prayer alone enough without outer prayer?

A. No, it is not enough. Having a soul and a body, we must glorify God with our bodies and with our souls, which are both from God, since it is natural that out of the abundance of the heart the lips should speak. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, was spiritual to the highest degree, but He also portrayed His spiritual prayer with both words and reverent movements of the body,

sometimes, for example, by raising His eyes to heaven, and sometimes by bowing His knees and face to the ground (see 1 Cor. 6:20; Mt. 12:34; Jn. 17:1; Lk. 22:41; Mt. 26:39).

Q. How can one achieve prayer that is not only verbal but also heartfelt?

A. The holy fathers, who gave very detailed and extensive guidances on prayer, explain that the main rule of prayer is to focus one's attention on every thought and every word of the prayer and to keep your thoughts from being scattered by extraneous subjects.

Q. Do the fathers advise you to work up your feelings during prayer?

A. On the contrary, they forbid it. It is impossible to work up a feeling; it will itself appear when one focuses his attention. And if someone tries to strain a feeling, for example, of compunction or fear, then he deceives himself; for in fact it produces only bodily tension (of breathing or heartbeat), and then, mistaking this for an upsurge of holy feeling, he falls into self-delusion or prelest.

Q. How much should someone pray?

A. The more you pray, the more it will bring you salvation. The Lord, Who needed nothing, spent whole nights in prayer. "He was also speaking a parable to them to this end, that it is needful to be praying always, and not to be fainthearted" (Lk. 18:1). The Lord concluded His parable about the unrighteous judge and the persistent petitioner with the words: "Hear what the judge of injustice saith. And God, shall He in no wise bring about the avenging of His elect who cry aloud to Him day and night" (Lk. 18:6-7), even if He does delay in avenging them?

With the same admonition to persistent prayer, the Lord precedes teaching His disciples the "Our Father" by giving an example of how even a sleeping man upon being awakened by his friend fulfills his request to lend him bread for a guest—and concluded this parable with the words: "I say to you, even if he will not give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his shameless importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (Lk. 11:8).

Q. How should one understand the words of Christ, to which those who are weighed down by long prayers like to refer: “But when ye pray, do not begin to repeat the same vain words over and over again, even as the heathens; for they think that they shall be heard for their loquacity. Do not therefore become like them” (Mt. 6:7-8)?

A. It is not the length of prayer that is condemned here but the recital of too many objects in prayer, with a detailed listing of everyday, material needs, which is evident from the further words of Christ: “For your Father knoweth of what things ye have need before ye ask Him” (Mt. 6:8).

Q. What should be done if, even with attentive and concentrated prayer, our hearts remain dry and alien to compunction?

A. The holy fathers teach us that we must patiently persevere in the struggle of frequent prayer: compunction is a gift of God’s grace, and if sometimes the Lord does not send it to the one who prays, it is in order to humble his heart, keep him from pride, and induce him to meditate on whether or not he has sins for which he has not yet brought repentance to God.

Q. What other difference is observed in the Beatitudes in comparison with the commandments of the Old Testament, except for the very manner of their presentation?

A. The Decalogue of Moses speaks primarily of a person’s deeds, while the Beatitudes of Christ concern the constant dispositions of his soul, that is, they bless the virtues and thus condemn the passions.

Q. What is a passion?

A. The constant, although not always felt, disposition of a person to this or that sin.

Q. Are passions easily cut off?

A. The whole life of a Christian must be spent in the struggle with the passions and in the suppression of them.

Q. How else can it be seen that in the eyes of God, it is not so much good deeds in and of themselves that are valued so much as good dispositions of the soul or the virtues?

A. From the following words of the Apostle Paul: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

“For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are worthy of respect, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are pleasing, whatsoever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, be considering these things. And what ye learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things be practicing; and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:8-9).

Q. So, if God values our dispositions, and not just the deeds themselves, then will a Christian attain salvation who does the external deeds of the Decalogue, but has a hard heart?

A. No; the apostle clearly preaches about this, “And if I dole out all of my goods, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but I have not love, I am being profited nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3).

Q. Then can it be concluded from this that external labors and good deeds are unnecessary for salvation? Can a Christian have the love of God without having external good deeds?

A. Such love is not true, for true love is expressed in podvigs (spiritual struggles) and is supported by them. The Apostle John writes, “This is the love of God, that we be keeping His commandments. And His commandments are not heavy” (1 Jn. 5:3), and “Let us not be loving in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 Jn. 3:18).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said the same. “Not everyone who saith to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one who doeth the will of My Father in the heavens” (Mt. 7:21).

Q. So, who is right in the well-known theological controversy: those who say Christians are saved by faith, or those who affirm we are saved through faith and good works?

A. Neither one nor the other. The Christian progresses towards God and salvation by a holy disposition of the soul, through the virtues; faith is a necessary condition for this, and by external good works these pious dispositions or moods are both revealed and reinforced.

But the very existence of holy feelings in a Christian, as well as their growth, is accomplished under the indicated conditions of the grace of God, which bestows upon him and multiplies in him the listed Beatitudes of virtue listed in the commandments.

Q. So what should a Christian do in order to not mistake outward podvigs for the most grace-filled virtue?

A. Attend to yourself, that is, be testing your conscience.

On the First Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the first commandment of the Lord to attain blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must be poor in spirit.

Q. What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

A. It means to have a spiritual conviction that we have nothing of our own but only have what God gives, and that we cannot do anything good without God's help and grace, and thus reckon oneself as nothing and resort to the mercy of God in everything. Briefly, according to the explanation of Saint John Chrysostom, spiritual poverty is humility (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 15 on Matthew).

Q. Can the rich also be poor in spirit?

A. No doubt they can, if they think that visible wealth is perishable and transient, and that it does not replace a lack of spiritual blessings.

"For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Or what shall a man give as an exchange for his soul?" (Mt. 16:26).

Q. Cannot bodily poverty serve for the perfection of spiritual poverty?

A. It could if a Christian chooses it voluntarily, for God's sake, or submissively endures the poverty that has befallen him.

Jesus Christ Himself said to the rich man on this matter, "If thou art willing to be perfect, go and sell thy possessions, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and keep on following Me" (Mt. 19:21).

Q. What does the Lord promise to the poor in spirit?

A. The kingdom of the heavens.

Q. How does the kingdom of the heavens belong to them?

A. In this life, internally and in an introductory way, through faith and hope; and in the future it is perfected, through participation in eternal blessedness.

Q. In what sense is this commandment called the first? Is it only first in numerical order?

A. No, not only because of this, but also because it is impossible to be a Christian without it, just as without obedience to the first commandment of the Decalogue it was impossible to be a Jew.

Q. But has it not been established that the greatest commandment is love for God and neighbor?

A. Undoubtedly so: in these two commandments of love is the highest virtue of Christianity, but the very desire to acquire virtues and to fight against sins and passions will not be deep and lasting if it is not combined with humility.

Q. But man is characterized by habitual pride and self-esteem; is it possible for him to immediately suppress them in himself?

A. No, Christians achieve this only through a long-term feat of inner ascetic struggle, but those who embark on the path of piety are required to acknowledge the unlawfulness and sinfulness of these prideful feelings and their unrighteousness before God.

Q. How is it clear that without such a disposition it is impossible to begin to be saved?

A. This is evident from the fact that the preaching of the Savior and the apostles was accepted by those people who were conscious of their unrighteousness before God, for example, Zacchaeus, Matthew, the healed demoniacs, the repentant harlot, but rejected by those who considered themselves right and were proud, for example, the Pharisees, legalists, Sadducees, Pilate, and the congregation of Jews who raised stones against the Lord because of His rebuke. At the same time, it should be noted that often those who rejected Christ were incomparably superior in outward behavior than many who accepted His words with faith but differed from them precisely because they lacked humility or the consciousness of their unrighteousness before God.

Q. If this is so, what should be thought of the so-called noble pride, or honor?

A. These are prejudices, pernicious superstitions left in Europe as a bitter legacy from the most hostile religion to Christianity: Roman paganism. The true Christian must resolutely renounce these prejudices, which have created the reprehensible and shameful custom of fighting or dueling.

Q. Besides being a direct violation of the sixth commandment of the Old Testament, how can it be seen that this custom is contrary to the teaching of Christ?

A. This custom, of course, requires everyone to challenge his offender to a duel, especially if the transgressor has struck the offended one in the face; but the Savior requires a man to do just the opposite: “Whosoever shall strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mt. 5:39). Christ the Savior Himself was beaten, as well as the apostles and martyrs and confessors, and this is their true glory.

Q. If the initial stage of humility, or spiritual poverty, is the recognition of the sinfulness of all pride and self-love and the consciousness of one's guilt before God, then what is the highest degree of this virtue?

A. Complete indifference to one's own advantages and to human praise or censure.

Q. Explain this with an example from the life of the Church.

A. One holy father, explaining this virtue to a disciple, invited him to go to the cemetery and first revile the dead, and then praise them, and then said, "When you become as indifferent to praise and humiliation as those dead buried in the cemetery, then truly you will be the owner of spiritual poverty, or humility."

On the Second Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the second commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must be mourning.

Q. In this commandment, what should be understood by the term "mourning"?

A. Sadness and contrition of heart and genuine tears because we serve the Lord imperfectly and unworthily, and even deserve His wrath for our sins. "For the sorrow in accordance with God worketh out repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world worketh out death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

Q. What does the Lord promise especially to those who mourn?

A. That they will be comforted.

Q. What kind of comfort is meant here?

A. The comfort of grace, consisting in the forgiveness of sins and in peace of conscience while still on earth, and the kingdom of heaven after its end.

About this comfort both the Old Testament seers and the holy Apostle John spoke; Saint John saw before the throne of God “the ones coming out of the affliction, the great one,...for the Lamb, the One in the midst of the throne, shall shepherd them, and shall guide them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from out of their eyes” (Rev. 7:14-17).

Q. At what time in our life is spiritual mourning especially befitting for us?

A. During prayer, in which we ask from God every day: Grant me, Lord, tears and the remembrance of death and contrition.

Q. What else should a true Christian mourn about?

A. About the sinful state of the world and about the persecution of the Church. So the Lord wept during His solemn entry into Jerusalem, saying about the city: “If thou knewest, even thou, and at least in this thy day, the things for thy peace! But now it is hidden from thine eyes” (Lk. 19:42).

Q. Why is the promise of comfort combined with the commandment of mourning?

A. So that sorrow for sins does not extend to despair.

Q. What sinful and dangerous condition precedes despair?

A. Despondency, for which reason Christians pray with prostrations: “The spirit of despondency give me not” (St. Ephraim).

Q. How does despondency differ from mourning and lamentation for one’s sins?

A. By bitter feelings and an unwillingness to receive comfort from God or neighbors.

Q. What does it turn into if you do not fight with it?

A. Into murmuring against God, anger, and despair.

Q. What is the highest degree of spiritual lamentation?

A. The gift of tears, or constant contrite mourning, in which sorrow about our distance from God, and pity for everyone, and joy regarding God's mercy is all combined. Therefore, this kind of sorrow is called joyful.

Q. How many have been honored with such a gift?

A. This gift was ingrained in many of God's saints, so that their eyes were constantly red from tears.

And at the present time, such grace-filled podvigs are found in Orthodox monasteries and among pilgrims and hermits.

On the Third Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the third commandment of the Lord for beatitude?

A. Those who desire beatitude must be meek.

Q. What is meekness?

A. A quiet disposition, combined with caution so as not to annoy anyone, and not to be irritated by anything.

Q. How should one acquire this virtue?

A. Do not grumble—neither at God, nor at men, and when something happens contrary to your desires, do not give way to anger, do not boast, and above all do not take revenge for offenses.

Q. What does the Lord promise to the meek?

A. That they inherit the earth.

Q. Who, long before Christ, spoke the same words about the meek?

A. The Psalmist David: “The meek shall inherit the earth, and they shall delight in an abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11).

Q. How is such a promise to be understood?

A. In relation to the followers of Christ in general, it is a prediction that came true literally, for the constantly meek Christians, instead of being eradicated by the fury of the pagans, inherited the inhabited world that the pagans had previously possessed.

The further meaning of this promise in relation to Christians both in general and individually is that they acquire the admiration of others and a good influence on people, and even, as it were, some kind of possession of the heart of others; and while maintaining the meekness of Christ until the end of their days, they will receive an inheritance, in the words of the psalmist, in the land of the living, where they live and do not die, that is, they will receive eternal blessedness (see Ps. 26:13).

Q. What is the highest degree of meekness?

A. Complete angerlessness towards everyone, a friendly feeling, and finally, love towards enemies.

Q. Is anyone who gets angry with a neighbor sinful?

A. The Bible says that “the very movement of anger is a fall” (Sir 1:22).

Q. Who can you point to as an image of the greatest meekness?

A. To the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom the Evangelist Matthew applies the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Behold, My Servant Whom I chose, My Beloved, in Whom My soul is well

pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall declare judgment to the nations. He shall not strive nor cry out, nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets. A crushed reed He shall not break to pieces, and a smoking flax He shall not quench, until He should send forth the judgment to victory. And in His name the nations shall hope" (Mt. 12:18-21).

Q. What else does the commandment of meekness oblige us to do?

A. To make reconciliation with our offenders and those we offend, without which it is impossible to offer prayer pleasing to Christ.

The Lord said: "If, then, thou offerest thy gift on the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath something against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way. First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Mt. 5:23, 24). The Savior repeats the same idea when he expounds the Lord's Prayer.

Q. Is it really possible for a person to love his enemies?

A. First of all, a true Christian cannot have enemies, but only haters, that is, people who hate him, and such people he can love if he himself is not enslaved to the passions, and he must love if he wants to do the will of the Lord: "Keep on loving your enemies, blessing those who curse you, doing well to those who hate you, and keep on praying for those who despitefully use you and are persecuting you" (Mt. 5:44).

Q. Is there not anger that is permissible and useful for salvation?

A. Such is the anger, that is, the indignation, of a Christian at his own negligence, sins, passions, and thoughts; also the anger against the tempter devil, in whom there is no longer anything good, but sheer evil.

On the Fourth Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the fourth commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Q. What does it mean to hunger after righteousness?

A. First, to ardently desire to achieve Christian righteousness, that is, to have zeal for the salvation of the soul; and second, to desire with all our heart that the righteousness of God should be established on earth instead of the unrighteousness that persecutes piety.

The petitions of the Lord's Prayer have the same meaning: "Let Thy kingdom come, let Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Q. Were there individuals hungering and thirsting for such societal righteousness before Christ?

A. Such were all the prophets of God, but much earlier the Righteous Job and the Kings David and Solomon. Here are their words: "Wherefore do the ungodly live, and grow old even in wealth? Their houses are prosperous, neither have they anywhere cause for fear, neither is there a scourge from the Lord upon them.... For the wicked hastens to the day of destruction: they shall be led away for the day of his vengeance," etc. (Job 21:7, 9, 30).

The Psalmist David in Psalm 72 sets forth similar lamentations about the impunity of the wicked and the fact that the righteous do not receive their crown of virtue here on earth.

The Book of Ecclesiastes of Solomon contains the same thirst for God's righteousness. Of the prophets, the Prophet Jeremiah lamented especially ardently, not finding it on earth: "O Lord,...why is it that the way of ungodly men prospers? that all that deal very treacherously are flourishing?... How long shall the land mourn, and the grass of the field wither, for the wickedness of them, that dwell in it? the beasts and birds are utterly destroyed, because the people said, 'God shall not see our ways'" (Jer. 12:1, 4).

Q. Did those hungering and thirsting for righteousness find any satisfaction before Christ?

A. Such spiritual satisfaction they received only at times and partly in the miraculous deeds of divine providence which shamed wickedness and exalted the righteous, but to a greater extent they were comforted by the promises of God about the coming dispensation of righteousness, when, according to the word of the angel to the Prophet Daniel, eternal truth would be brought forth (Dan. 9:24), that is, the Peacemaker would appear, in Whom

subsisted the aspirations of all the nations, Whose coming was predicted even in the prophecies of the Patriarch Jacob (see Gen. 49:10).

Q. Before Christ, were there people hungering and thirsting for righteousness in the sense of achieving righteousness?

A. Such were all the righteous patriarchs, prophets, and in general, all pious Jews. The Book of Psalms is filled with such exalted prayers for the purification of the heart and the sanctification of the soul that it is the best guide for prayer among the sons of the kingdom, that is, Christians.

Q. What psalms predominantly expound such a hunger for holy righteousness in the soul of man?

A. Psalms 119, 50, etc.

Q. What prayer of the New Testament Church expresses the soul's hunger for righteousness?

A. Most of her prayers; for example, in the Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian: "O Lord and Master of my life," which is repeated on the days of the Great Fast seventeen times daily with prostrations.

Q. What is the advantage that Christians have in comparison with the Old Testament Jews in hungering for righteousness, when righteousness is not, and will never be, fully realized on earth?

A. Christians, being affirmed that they should expect a new heaven and a new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13), and that our earthly life "is a vapor which for a little time appeareth, but then is made to disappear" (Jas. 4:14), at last, reconciled with the suffering of the redemptive Passion of the Lord, in their hunger for righteousness, also attain fulfillment, although they endure suffering in their own striving for the truth of God, or for righteousness.

Q. How does Scripture teach about this?

A. The Apostle Paul writes: “we boast in afflictions also, knowing that the affliction worketh out patience; and patience, a tested character; and a tested character, hope. And the hope doth not put to shame, for the love of God hath been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us” (Rom. 5:3-5).

Q. Do those hungry for righteousness on earth find complete fulfillment?

A. No. The perfect satiation of the soul, created for the enjoyment of infinite good, will follow in eternal life, according to the dictum of the psalmist: “I shall be filled when Thy glory is shown to me” (Psalm 16:15).

Q. What should one think of those who are fighting with special persistence against social injustice on earth: against triumphant lies, insults to the poor, slander in the press, and so on?

A. They are worthy of great praise if they do it out of love for the truth and not out of anger against people and not out of self-exaltation or self-justification.

Q. What are the basic virtues prescribed by this commandment for all Christians in general, and for those who hold official ranks in particular?

A. Truthfulness, self-control, evasion of flattery, and for judges, rulers, and juries, justice and impartiality.

Q. What are the highest manifestations of the virtue of those hungering after righteousness?

A. Complete dedication to the glory of God with the renunciation of all earthly advantages and pleasures, as Saint John Chrysostom described it.

Q. Is this dedication to the glory of God a particular kind of service?

A. No, it is possible in the most varied titles, but in the life of the Church it was and is manifested mainly in two ministries.

Q. In which ones?

A. In the manifestation of societal truth, that is, among the human community, on the one hand, with the apostolic or the preaching, pastoral ministry, and in the attainment of personal truth, on the other hand, in the monastic life.

Q. In what words do the apostles describe their ministry for the righteousness of God?

A. The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: “In every way we are afflicted, but not straitened; we are at a loss, but not utterly at a loss; persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed—always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4:8-10; cf. 2 Cor. 6:4-10).

Q. In what does the monastic vocation consist?

A. In separation from family, in a virgin life, combined with the renunciation of property and one’s own will and the surrender of the latter to his spiritual father.

Q. On what words of Christ is this way of life based?

A. On the following: “Everyone who leaveth houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, on account of My name, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit life everlasting” (Mt. 19:29).

Q. Are there examples of such an ascetic feat in the Gospel?

A. Undoubtedly there are, firstly, in the person of John the Baptist, who for his way of life is revered as the inaugurator of monasticism, and then in the person of the holy apostles, one of whom said to the Lord, “We left all and followed Thee; what then shall be for us?” (Mt. 19:27).

Q. What did the Lord answer to this?

A. In His answer He spoke the words we quoted above. This is the reward for those hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

On the Fifth Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the fifth commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire to be blessed must be merciful.

Q. How should this commandment be obeyed?

A. Through works of mercy—bodily and spiritual. As Saint John Chrysostom explains, “The way of showing mercy is manifold, and this commandment is broad” (Homily 15 on Matthew).

Q. What is the essence of bodily mercy?

A. 1. To nourish the hungry.

2. To give the thirsty to drink.

3. To clothe the naked or those who are lacking necessary adequate clothing.

4. To visit someone in prison.

5. To visit the sick, serve him and help him towards recovery or towards a Christian preparation for death.

6. To give hospitality to the stranger in your house and take care of him.

7. To bury those who died in poverty.

Q. What are the spiritual works of mercy?

A. 1. The exhortation to convert a sinner from the error of his ways (Jas. 5:20).

2. Teaching the ignorant about truth and goodness.

3. Granting your neighbor kind and well-timed advice in difficulty or in danger unnoticed by him.

4. Praying to God for him.

5. Comforting the mourning.

6. Not repaying the evil that others have done to us.

7. Forgiving insults from the heart.

Q. Is it not contrary to the commandment of mercy when a guilty man is punished according to justice?

A. Not at all, if it is done out of duty and with good intentions, that is, to correct him or to protect the innocent from his crimes.

Q. It has been said that the Beatitudes demand from a Christian constant virtuous dispositions and not only external deeds; does not this beatitude, as well as the seventh, represent an exception to that idea?

A. Not at all. It is clear from the Gospel that the Lord praises the merciful not for their outward deeds, but for the disposition of love and generosity that prompts them to such deeds. This is clear from His preference for the poor lady donor, who gave two mites (lepta) to the temple, before the rich ones, who put large offerings in the treasury of the temple.

Q. Is it possible to do works of spiritual mercy and be a comforter and peacemaker without having a heart full of love and compassion for others?

A. It is absolutely impossible: words of consolation and reconciliation, coming from a heart alien to love, will not have a good influence, and the Apostle Paul says about such a person, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but I have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

Q. If this commandment contains an admonition concerning the highest virtue of the Gospel, that is, love, then is not the reward that is promised to the merciful, namely, pardon of the soul at the Judgment of God, a meager one?

A. On the contrary, one should think that this reward is promised not for the highest degree of this virtue, but for those Christians who, while pursuing it, have not yet cleansed their souls of the other passions and primarily need divine mercy for themselves.

Q. Show this from the Scriptures.

A. About the forgiveness of sins by God for showing mercy to the unfortunate there are many records in the Old Testament, but it is enough to quote from the New Testament the words of the Apostle Iakovos: “For the judgment shall be merciless to him who rendered no mercy. Mercy boasteth against judgment” (Jas. 2:13); and about spiritual mercy: “the one who turneth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins” (that is, his own) (Jas. 5:20); and the Apostle Peter: “And before all things have fervent love among yourselves, for ‘love shall cover a multitude of sins’” (1 Pet. 4:8).

Q. Is it revealed in the Gospel that, above all, the virtue of mercy will be valued at the Judgment of God?

A. This is perfectly clear from the Lord’s speech about His Second Coming and Last Judgment (see Matthew 25).

Q. What virtues are prescribed by this commandment of Christ for all Christians?

A. Generosity, selflessness, and love.

Q. How should one resist the idea that it would be better, instead of squandering funds on the poor, to use your money for your own enjoyment?

A. We must remind ourselves of the words of Christ and Moses: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goeth forth out of the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4), as well as the

parable of the Lord about a man who was going to hoard his wealth without helping anyone. “But God said to him, ‘Fool, this night they demand thy soul from thee; and what thou didst prepare, for whom shall it be?” (Lk. 12:20).

On the Sixth Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the sixth commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must be pure in heart.

Q. Is purity of heart the same as honesty [Rus. “clean-heartedness”]?

A. Honesty, or sincerity, according to which a person does not hypocritically show good dispositions without having them in his heart, but manifests the good dispositions of his heart with good deeds, is only the lowest degree of purity of heart. A person achieves the pinnacle with a constant and unremitting struggle of vigilance over himself, rejecting from his heart every unlawful desire and thought and every attachment to earthly objects, constantly observing in his heart the remembrance of God and the Lord Jesus Christ with faith and love; this is called “walking before God,” for which the Bible praises Enoch and Abraham.

Q. What is the primary reason for acquiring this achievement of spiritual life or walking with God?

A. The fear of God, as stated in the Book of Proverbs: “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord” (Proverbs 9:10).

Q. What does the Lord promise those with a pure heart?

A. That they will see God.

Q. How is this promise to be understood?

A. The Logos of God likens the human heart to the eye and ascribes to perfect Christians the enlightened eyes of the heart (see Eph. 1:18). As a pure eye can see light, so a pure heart can behold God.

Q. Does this promise apply to the future life or the present one?

A. In full to the future life, but partly to the present. The apostle testifies to this: “For now we see by means of a mirror, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall fully know even as I also was fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Q. What virtue is especially closely related to purity of heart?

A. Chastity, which is guarded by abstinence and fasting; on the contrary, gluttony and drunkenness, as vices hostile to chastity, deprive the soul of the ability to ascend to the contemplation of God and the enjoyment of His words: “Be taking heed to yourselves, lest your hearts should be weighed down with carousing, and drinking, and cares of this life, and that day should come upon you suddenly. For as a snare shall it come upon all those sitting upon the face of the whole earth. Be vigilant then, in every season entreating that ye might be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Lk. 21:34-36).

Q. What is the highest reward promised to those who have maintained complete chastity and purity of heart?

A. The Apostle John in the Apocalypse sees the extraordinary glory of many righteous ones singing before the throne of God, as it were, a new song, which no one could learn but themselves, and explains, “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones following the Lamb wheresoever He may go. These were purchased from among men, first-fruits to God and to the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4).

On the Seventh Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the seventh commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must be peacemakers.

Q. How should this commandment be obeyed?

A. One should not only act cordially with everyone, even with the concession of one's rights, for the sake of preserving peace (so long as it is not contrary to duty and is not harmful to anyone), but also try to reconcile others who are at war with each other when we have the opportunity, and when we do not, to pray to God for their reconciliation.

Q. Why is this virtue of peacemaking great?

A. Because she not only cares about what is connected with the life of the ascetic himself but seeks, as it were, to bring heaven itself down to earth, so that instead of the anger and hatred that separates men from each other, "the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, shall guard your hearts" (Phil. 4:7), just like the Son of God came and preached the good tidings, peace to you (that is, to all men) who were afar off and to those who were near" (Eph. 2:17).

Q. How is such a beneficial influence achieved by peacemakers?

A. Peacemakers are men filled with great piety and zeal for God. The society with which they come into contact is thereby imbued with imitating one another in zeal for God and love for one's neighbor. In such an environment their petty human quarrels and mutual anger subside, which took place before they had a higher goal in life.

Thus, the Book of Acts testifies of the first Christians that they had one heart and one soul (see Acts 4:32).

Q. What must be observed in order to acquire the spirit of a peacemaker?

A. One must be able to find in every neighbor something good or amenable to good and approach his soul from this direction in order to gain a good influence on it.

Q. Do we have examples of this from the holy apostles?

A. Undoubtedly we do. Here are the words of the Apostle Paul: “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews.... To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak. To all these I have become all things, that by all means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:20, 22).

Q. And how can one make oneself capable of such insight into the good?

A. First of all, we must not condemn our neighbors, but to this end we must curb our tongue; then we must pray for them and remove from our soul the thought of vanity and love of power, so that all the good of life around us is directed not towards our glory but towards God’s glory.

Q. Who is called to the podvig of a peacemaker?

A. All Christians, but primarily Church pastors, as successors of the apostolic ministry, about which the Church chants as follows: “Bound by the union of love, the apostles, laying down their lives for Christ Who rules over all, had their beautiful feet cleansed, proclaiming the good news to all the world.”

Q. What does the Lord promise the peacemakers?

A. That they will be called sons of God.

Q. What does this promise signify?

A. It indicates both the height of the podvig of peacemakers and the reward prepared for them. Since they imitate the only-begotten Son of God, Who came to earth to reconcile man who sinned against the justice of God, by their struggle, they are promised the blessed name of sons of God and, without a doubt, a degree of blessedness worthy of this name.

On the Eighth Commandment of Beatitude

Q. What is the eighth commandment of the Lord for blessedness?

A. Those who desire blessedness must be willing to endure persecution for righteousness without betraying or changing the true Faith.

Q. Why are reproach and persecution foretold to zealots of righteousness and worshipers of Christ?

A. Because the world hates the servants of Christ, since the customs prevailing in it are evil—although pleasing to the people of this world—and denouncers of public unrighteousness are hateful to it: "He who denounces the wicked shall get a stain for himself" (Proverbs 9:7).

Q. Does Scripture support this view of the world?

A. Yes. The Apostle John writes, "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19).

The Lord says to His disciples on the day of His betrayal: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated Me before it hath hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world—but I chose you for Myself out of the world—therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

Q. Why does the Lord divide the beatitude of those who suffer for the truth into two parts?

A. It is according to the nature of suffering. The first degree consists in persecution, which should also be understood in the literal sense of how the saints were banished into exile: Athanasius the Great, John Chrysostom, Philip the Metropolitan of Moscow, and many others (and even in antiquity, Patriarch Joseph), and in a more general sense, as the estrangement of his former friends and even relatives from the zealot of the Faith; this, the first test of spiritual alienation, even without being expelled from one's home and homeland, is blessed by the Lord in the eighth beatitude, and exile by the verdict of the authorities and people—in the ninth.

Q. Can you point to an example of the first kind of persecution in Holy Scripture?

A. The entire 68th Psalm is written on behalf of such a sufferer for truth and faith. "For on account of Thee did I endure reproach; shame covered my face. I became one having been

alienated from my brethren and a stranger to the sons of my mother. For the zeal of Thy house did eat me up, and the reproaches of the ones reproaching Thee fell upon me" (Psalm 68:8-10).

Q. Why are they promised the reward of the kingdom of the heavens, just as the poor in spirit?

A. The poor in spirit have renounced self-love, that is, that feeling that alienates a person from God, and those driven out for righteousness' sake have renounced the world hostile to the kingdom of God, and therefore are the most worthy sons of this kingdom on earth and its most worthy heirs in heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ, having told His disciples that He had chosen them out of the world, lifted up a prayer to the heavenly Father for all who believe in Him, saying, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John 17:24).

On the Ninth Commandment of Beatitude

Q. The world about which the Lord speaks in His prayer is the world of the Jews and the pagans; can His words about a hostile world also apply to a Christian community?

A. Unfortunately, in Christian society there were confessors and exiles for the truth of God, like Saints Chrysostom, Philip, and others, and moreover not only from heretics but also from Orthodox rulers and even from unworthy pastors of the Church. Even the Apostle Paul lamented that he endured troubles "in perils of robbers, in perils from mine own race, in perils from Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26).

Q. What is meant by a world hostile to Christ?

A. Established sinful customs and universal, false, unholy concepts in one or another environment that unite society in an unkind temperament and therefore in a hostile attitude towards the preachers of truth, zealots of the truth, and the virtue of the Gospel.

Q. How do the Holy Scriptures speak about the inner content of worldly life, that is, the life conducted by the society of men who do not strive for piety?

A. The Apostle John writes, “If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the false pretensions of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

Q. What are the main expressions of hostility to the preachers of Christ and to the righteous enumerated in the Beatitudes of the Gospel?

A. Hatred, slander, and persecution.

Q. Where is hatred mentioned?

A. The words “reproach you” express this. Cursing or reproach is an expression of hatred, but this thought is expressed even more clearly by the Savior in the exposition of His Beatitudes in the Evangelist Luke: “Blessed are ye whenever men hate you, and whenever they separate you, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man” (Lk. 6:22).

Q. Was the Lord Himself subject to these three kinds of persecution?

A. As the Establisher of righteous asceticism, He experienced all of this Himself. “If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated Me before it hath hated you” (John 15:18).

And concerning persecution: “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20).

Q. Who, then, persecuted the Savior?

A. The Gadarenes drove Him out, though respectfully; the Jews, taking up stones, forced Him to leave; the inhabitants of Nazareth took him out of the city in order to throw him off the mountain.

Q. When was the Savior cast out?

A. His enemies called Him a glutton and a wine bibber, they said that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons; at their lawless trial they gathered deliberate false witnesses against Him, although they could not achieve a single credible accusation, but, bringing Him to Pilate, they deliberately slandered Him, saying: “We found this One perverting the nation, and hindering the giving of tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King” (Lk. 23:2).

Q. So, what podvig is set before us in this commandment?

A. Those who wish to be blessed must be ready to joyfully accept reproach, persecution, calamity, and death itself for the name of Christ and for the true Orthodox Faith.

Q. What is the name of the feat required by this commandment?

A. The feat of martyrdom.

Q. What virtues should a Christian cultivate in himself in order to endure this feat if God requires it from him?

A. First, hope in the nearness of the Lord to us, Who said to the confessors of the Faith, “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all those who oppose you shall not be able to contradict nor withstand” (Lk. 21:15). Second, constant obedience to God and our conscience, or loyalty to our Lord at the thought of the temporariness and vanity of everything earthly, as the Apostle John teaches us: “The world is passing on its way, and the desire of it; but the one doing the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17).

The Lord Himself teaches us the same: “And I say to you, My friends, do not become afraid because of those who kill the body, and after these things are not able to do anything more. But I will show you Whom ye should fear: fear the One Who after the killing hath power to cast into Gehenna; yea, I say to you, this One fear” (i.e., the Lord God) (Lk. 12:4-5).

Q. What does the Lord promise in heaven to those who suffer for the holy Faith and piety?

A. He said to them, “Be rejoicing and be exceedingly glad, for your reward is great in the heavens” (Mt. 5:12).

Q. Is it really possible to rejoice in the midst of persecution?

A. The apostles, having experienced imprisonment and beating from the sanhedrin of the Jews, “went on their way rejoicing from the presence of the sanhedrin, because they were deemed worthy to be dishonored for the sake of His name” (Acts 5:41).

In their epistles, the apostles repeatedly exhort Christians who suffer for Him to rejoice in Christ always, especially in sorrows. “If ye are being reproached in the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of the glory and power and the Spirit of God resteth upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14). And, indeed, innumerable martyrs rejoiced in the midst of terrible suffering, as their lives now narrate.

Q. What has been revealed to us about the perfect crowning of martyrs after death?

A. The Apostle John saw in heaven under the altar in front of God the souls of those who had been killed for the word of God, and they were given white robes (see Rev. 6:9-11).

Final Chapter: On the Podvigs of Piety

Q. What other condition is required for the fulfillment of the Gospel virtues?

A. The venerable Anthony the Great, when the elders were debating which virtue was most necessary for hermits and some pointed to humility and obedience, others to chastity and fasting, and so on, said that all these virtues are desirable but they would not lead the ascetic to salvation if he or his spiritual guide did not have another virtue, which is indispensable with all the others, such as salt added to various dishes. This virtue is called discernment.

Q. What is this virtue?

A. It is approximately the same as prudence.

Q. How can an inexperienced one acquire it who is zealous for salvation?

A. He must certainly be guided by the instructions of a spiritual father and, if possible, the works of the holy fathers and spiritual writers.

Q. Can you name at least one such guide?

A. One can point to a modern work: *The Path to Salvation*, compiled by Bishop Theophan the Recluse (d. 1894).

Q. Can you give an example of what kind of useful information one can learn by studying about spiritual discernment from books or through the advice of spiritual fathers?

A. First of all, the gradualness of podvigs (spiritual struggles), which, if not observed, can lead one to suffer "shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19).

Q. Is it possible to show from the Gospel that there should be a gradual progression in spiritual struggles?

A. Certainly so. When the rich young man asked Christ, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" then the Lord answered him: "Thou shalt not murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; be honoring thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The young man said to Him, "All these I kept for myself from my youth; what lack I yet?" Jesus said to him, "If thou art willing to be perfect, go and sell thy possessions, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and keep on following Me" (Mt. 19:16, 18-21).

Q. Is this command universal?

A. Without a doubt it is universal for those who are like that young man in purity of life and in their position, that is, they are not bound by wife, children, or other obligatory conditions of life.

Q. And what would happen to such a young man immediately pursuing voluntary poverty if he did not free himself from all the vices and was a stranger to hard work and obedience?

A. He would become a parasite, and perhaps even a thief (see Prov. 30:8-9).

Q. Is there a progression in the virtues of the nine Beatitudes?

A. The holy fathers find in them a whole ladder of perfection, as follows: The first decision to embark on the path of salvation arises when one is conscious of one's spiritual poverty; this consciousness awakens in a Christian a mournful attitude about his sinfulness and spiritual weakness, and he weeps. It is easy for one who weeps for his sins and imperfection to remain meek, for irritation is associated with the thought of one's own righteousness and superiority over others. Further, people filled with repentance and meek in soul strive to establish good and righteousness around themselves, that is, they are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and they, of course, demand good and righteousness first of all from themselves, that is, they become merciful and brotherly. Mercy towards others drives out selfish desires from our hearts and serves to purify the heart, as the Savior said, "But rather give alms of all things within your power; and behold, everything is clean to you" (Lk. 11:41). A pure heart, seeing God's finger in everything, is filled with compassion and brings harmony everywhere, as a peacemaker. Around such a zealot of piety, the envy and hatred of the world rises; his former friends estrange themselves from him and thus force him to leave their company, and he inherits the eighth beatitude; and if his zeal for God multiplies and his good influence expands, then the hatred of the wicked grows around him, and they subject him to those persecutions that were mentioned by the Savior in the last beatitude.

Q. Should one think that following the path of each beatitude is possible only by fulfilling the previous ones?

A. Not at all, since the commandments of God require actions of us, for example, showing mercy and confessing the Faith at every appropriate occasion in our life, but the progression of the Beatitudes implies that we must constantly check whether we have sinned against the more preparatory commandments, and try to fill those gaps in our soul with appropriate deeds and prayers.

Q. Besides the virtue of discernment, what other conditions are necessary for the attainment of the Gospel virtues set forth in the Beatitudes?

A. Two conditions: firstly, non-hypocrisy, and secondly, constant hope in God—the Helper and Patron of those who are being saved.

Q. Why should you especially guard your soul from hypocrisy?

A. Because in the hypocritical, that is, feigned or vain performance of deeds, our soul does not acquire virtuous dispositions and is deprived of heavenly rewards, as the Lord explained in detail in His additional words to the Beatitudes, exposing the vanity of the Pharisees and teaching us to do our alms, fasting, and prayer "in secret; and thy Father Who seeth in secret Himself shall render what is due to thee openly" (Mt. 6:4).

Q. But if we hide our good deeds, then would we not deprive the society of men around us of spiritual benefit?

A. Although our contemporaries constantly raise such objections against secret ascetics and hermits, they are wrong, because the soul of an ascetic, enlightened by secret struggles, will in due time be filled with abundant grace-filled power and will preach to men, and then its deeds will become apparent by themselves, as, for example, the deeds of Saint John the Baptist, who retired into the wilderness from his youth until 30 years of age, when "Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the country round about the Jordan were going out to him, and were being baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mt. 3:5-6).

Q. Does the Lord discuss such a social impact due to the faith and virtue of His followers?

A. In the same speech in which He commands the concealment of one's external podvigs, He said to the apostles, "Ye are the light of the world. A city situated on the top of a mountain cannot be hid.... Thus, let your light shine before men, that they might see your good works, and might glorify your Father Who is in the heavens" (Mt. 5:14, 16).

Q. Should all prayers be performed in secret?

A. No, because the Lord Himself prayed more than once in the presence of the people (see John 11:41; 12:28) and attended public prayer in the Jerusalem temple; He commands us to hide our prayers, fasting, and other works that are not generally obligatory but which are deeds of special zeal of a pious person.

Q. What does the Holy Scripture say about the necessity for our salvation to safeguard hope upon God in our souls?

A. The Apostle Paul testifies: “And there now abideth faith, hope, love, these three things” (1 Cor. 13:13). The holy Prophet David exclaims, “The ones having trusted in the Lord are like Mount Sion; the one inhabiting Jerusalem shall not be shaken unto the age” (Ps. 124:1).

Q. In what sense is it necessary to accompany the fulfillment of our podvig, that is, our entire life, with hope in God?

A. If the fulfillment of the commandments of God constantly encounters earthly fears (for example, how not to become poor by doing alms, how not to disadvantage yourself and your family by speaking the truth), then the fulfillment of the law of God remains accessible only to that Christian who, first of all, kindles in his soul hope in God as his Helper in his podvigs and as his Protector from the world; and secondly, he will confirm in his soul a readiness to lose worldly goods if God and conscience require it and, thus, banish any concern for worldly enjoyment.

Q. How does the Holy Gospel teach about this?

A. The Lord, in the same conversation in which he expounded the Beatitudes, explained this truth in detail: “Do not become anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the nations seek after; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye need all of these things. But be seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not become anxious for the morrow; for the morrow shall be anxious about the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the evil of it.” (Mt. 6:31-34).

Q. Really, according to these words, should one not sow in the spring, store grain in the fall, etc., but only take care of what is needed for today?

A. No, the Lord does not tell us to demand miracles and stop working for the future days of our lives; He prohibits only that spiritual anxiety, that torment of the soul for future needs, to which those who do not trust in the Lord succumb.

Q. How can this understanding of the commandment be confirmed?

A. A few lines above, the same words of the Lord are inscribed in the Gospel with the explanation: “Cease being anxious for your soul, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink” (Mt. 6:25), etc., without indicating the present day or the days to come. The mention of “your soul” (Mt. 6:25) clearly indicates worry and sorrow, which should be far from the soul that has placed its trust in God, but it is not forbidden to work and store, quietly doing your job and leaving everything to the will of God.

Q. And if it seems to us, like that rich young man, that we have fulfilled all the commandments, what should we answer to such a thought?

A. We must reject it as a deception of the enemy, for the commandments of God require perfection and becoming God-like, to which a Christian can only approach from afar, constantly stumbling along his path. Moreover, we must remember that even if there were such a Christian quickly approaching the goal of his Christian purpose, then he must also act according to the word of Christ: “Whenever ye have done all things which were commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable slaves, for we have done that which we were bound to do’” (Lk. 17:10).